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ISSUE NO 221
JOIN THE DARK SIDE

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PLAYSTATION
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"WE'RE GIVING YOU FREEDOM"

BLACK OPS II THE SECRET FILES

Former Treyarch man delivers stunning inside info

"THIS IS ABOUT SURVIVAL"

TOMB RAIDER

Square Enix opens up on the truth about Lara

EXCLUSIVE REVIEW

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SPECTACLE OF
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GHIBLI AND ONE
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for Sony's consoles

Lara's back



For once, there's something on this page better looking than my potato-skin-stuffed-with-sausage-meat face. It's Lara! With a

bow! And fire in the background! And no dinosaurs, no dual pistols, and not much raiding of tombs either. What's going on with the reboot? Will it be anything like the Lara adventures of old? We give you our hands-on report and chat to *Tomb Raider* overlord Karl Stewart to find out in just a couple of pages.

We also managed to track down a former employee of Treyarch to find out what really goes on behind the doors at *Call Of Duty*'s 'other' studio, which is now deep in production on *Black Ops II*, and find out the real story behind the game that killed Midway, *This Is Vegas*. We don't just regurgitate press releases! Mostly because we don't eat them. We're not idiots. Well, not all of us.

You'll also note that the game releases have started cranking up of late, so there's finally some choice trickling back onto the shelves. More importantly, we look at what lies ahead in PlayStation's future, on PS3, PSN and Vita. What exclusives can you look forward to? What does Sony have in its arsenal for the years ahead? We've even packed a look at potential PlayStation 4 games on our DVD, so check that out too.

Lots going on, lots in the issue, lots on the DVD, lots of words, lots of pictures and someone sexier than me. Anything is possible in 2012!

Enjoy the issue.

Rking

Editor

Get in touch!

Let us entertain you during our downtime at work



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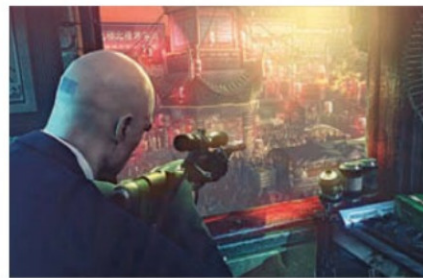
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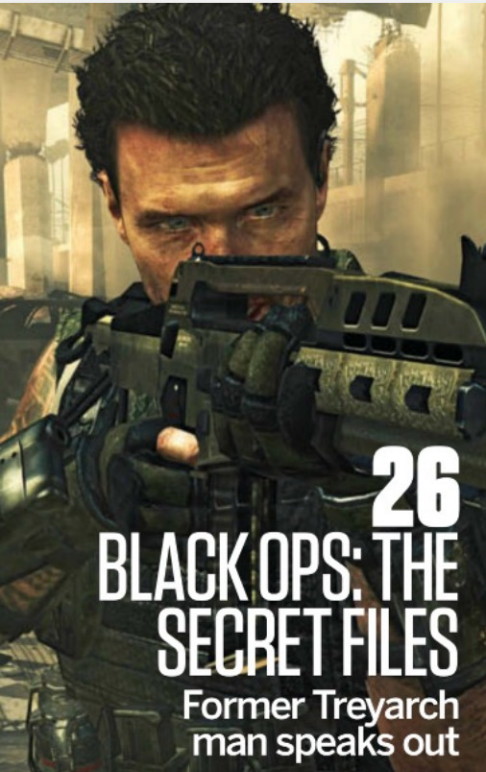
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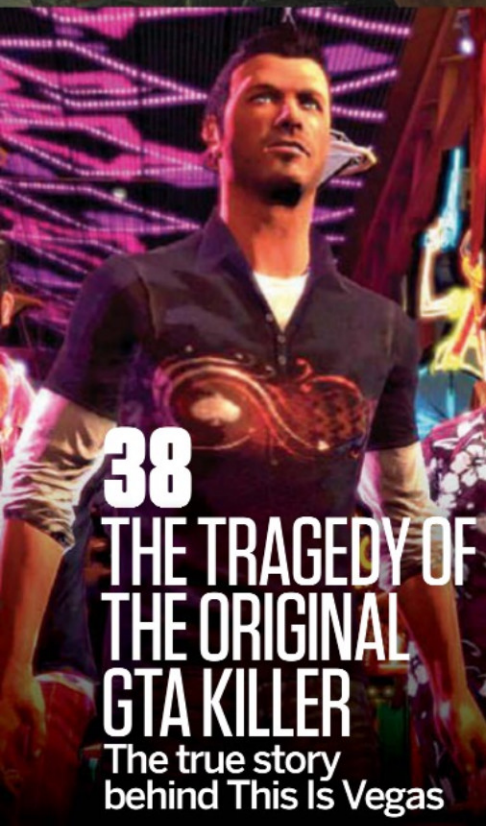
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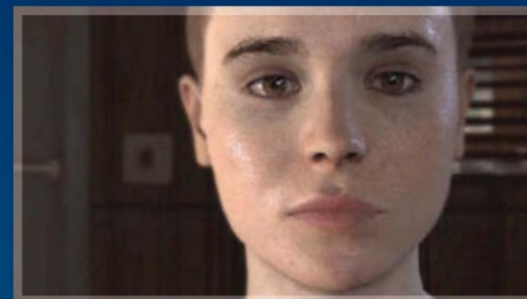
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EXCLUSIVE ON YOUR DISC

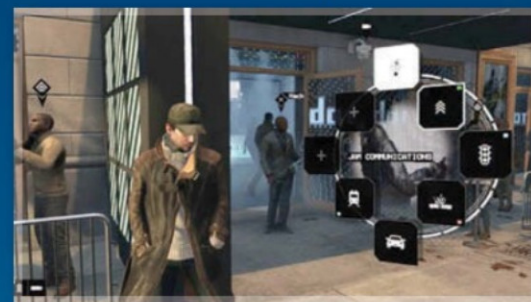


BEYOND VS HEAVY RAIN

We look at *Heavy Rain*, the previous game by Quantic Dream, to see what we could learn about *Beyond*. The answer: quite a lot. So there.

THE FIRST PS4 GAMES?

The prime suspects for PlayStation 4's launch are lined up against a wall and examined by the certified videogame doctors of **Play**.



THE PERVIEST PS3 MOMENTS

Apart from *Catherine*, because we gave our copy away on Twitter. And we forgot how to do the *Metal Gear* posters thing too.

DEUS EX: PS2 CLASSIC

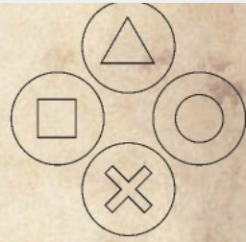
It's available on PSN, so we go back and re-evaluate an FPS classic. But mostly we forget how to play it and blow ourselves up. Sigh.



SEE THE BACK PAGE FOR MORE!

TOMB RAIDER





LARA CROFT REBORN

THERE ARE NO DINOSAURS, NO WISECRACKS AND NO DUAL PISTOLS. THIS IS A NEW LARA, AS WE SIT DOWN WITH **KARL STEWART** OF **CRYSTAL DYNAMICS** TO LEARN MORE...

Tomb Raider has been reborn and reinvented. An origin tale for one of the most famous characters in all of videogames, Lara Croft, this reboot could re-establish the series as one of the biggest in the world all over again. But it's not all rosy, both from the perspective of what the actual game is looking like and what happens to the constantly suffering Lara through the near-endless brutalisation she faces this time around.

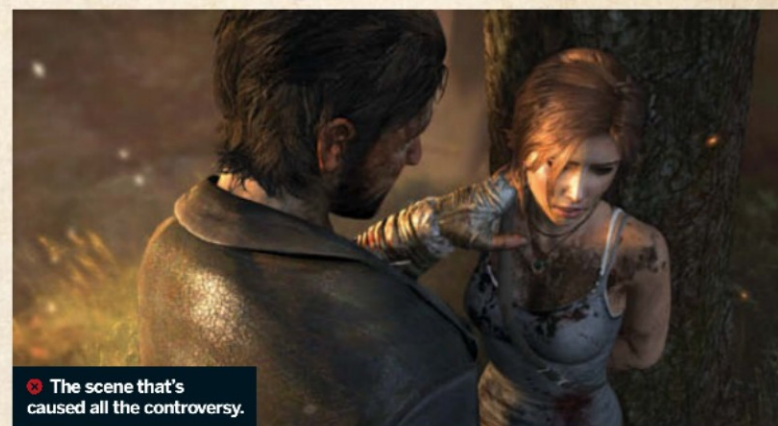
To get a better idea it's always handy to play the game, so we spent some hands-on time with *Tomb Raider*, and it also helps to back things up by speaking to someone involved, so we threw a few questions in the direction of Karl Stewart, global brand director at Crystal Dynamics. The full picture isn't one that strikes us as being perfect, but it's one that's keeping our interest far more than many other games could hope to do.

But this is different – *Tomb Raider* is a new game in and of itself, but one from a franchise that still lives in recent memory. Stewart is well aware of this: "We feel we've really kept the essence of *Tomb Raider* that players have loved in the past. For example, whereas the previous games featured traditional puzzles, this Lara will need to use her sense of resourcefulness to navigate environmental obstacles, like manipulating the physics, using the weight of objects or other items to forge a path through the world, escape a situation, or even combat an adversary."

Crystal Dynamics wants Lara to be vulnerable in *Tomb Raider*. It wants players to see how she develops from a confused, uncertain girl into a confident, assured woman. It wants you to play alongside her trials and tribulations, and it wants you to feel her pain; to feel the terror and suffering she is put through.

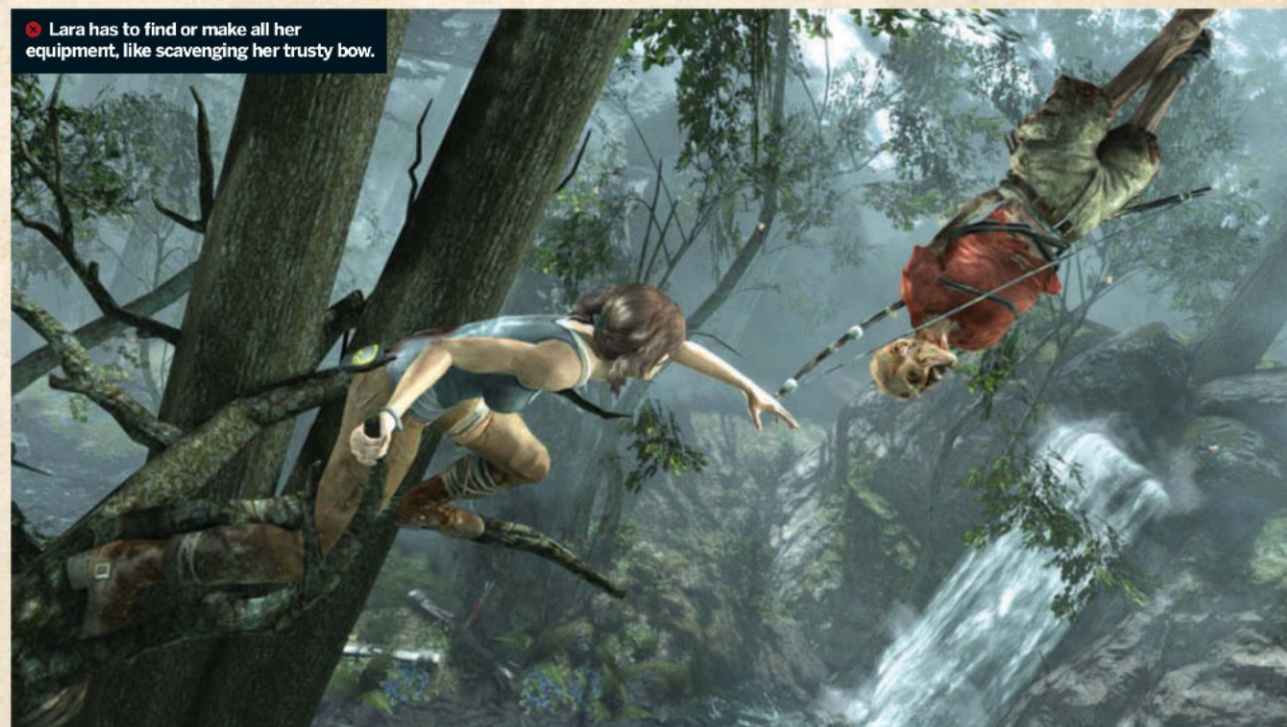
But, from what we've seen of this new *Tomb Raider* so far, Crystal Dynamics isn't looking to really challenge players as much as we might have expected. Granted, it's hard to get a true reflection of how challenging something will be from a media-friendly demo aimed at garnering interest from the mass market, but regardless, the suffering Lara goes through in *Tomb Raider* looks like it will be more of a cinematic element than what was first assumed. It's not a punishing gameplay mechanic.

Our main question has to do with one very particular thing: time and time again, we were presented with life-threatening situations. Crossing a makeshift log bridge over a ravine. Fighting off wolves with nothing more than a bow and arrow. Tackling a QTE to retain your grip on a handhold. They were all quite exciting, looked fantastic and generally impressed, but there was one underlying feeling: >



✖ The scene that's caused all the controversy.

“ We feel we've really kept the essence of *Tomb Raider*. This Lara will need to use her sense of resourcefulness to forge a path through the world, escape a situation, or even combat an adversary ”



✖ Lara has to find or make all her equipment, like scavenging her trusty bow.

TOMB RAIDER



✖ Lara's apparent vulnerability contrasts with her resourcefulness in surviving.

“She's smart and resourceful and uses her environment to escape. It's a very empowering experience, and very Tomb Raider, too”

> we doubt most players would fail. At all. Ever. In fact, our original notes from playing through the QTE climbing section state: 'The likelihood of you missing [a QTE] and falling are slim unless you have no fingers – in which case it's unlikely you'd have got that far anyway.'

But while some may find issue with this, it's all part of the plan. *Tomb Raider* is not a survival simulator and it's not meant to be supremely difficult – it's a cinematic gaming experience. "This is not a game where the player will need to spend hours grinding, or searching for food to stay alive," Stewart tells us. "The challenges the player faces along the way will always fit with the narrative arc."

But that's not to say the survival aspect is marginalised in any way, as Stewart is keen to clarify: "The whole game is really about survival – it's a key theme. If you remember back to last year's E3, we showed a very early part of the game, which finds Lara hanging upside down. She's smart and resourceful and uses her environment to escape – it's a very empowering experience for the player, and very *Tomb Raider*, too – but it's also about her will to escape and thus survive."

As if that wasn't enough use of the world 'survive', Stewart continues: "Survival will be a thread that runs throughout the game's narrative, and the island location will remain hostile and threatening. But Lara – and the player controlling her – will build up skills to cope. We hope players will find that her smart resourcefulness in navigating obstacles, traversing

the environment and combating her adversaries will be extremely empowering, challenging and feel good to play."

All of these elements are backed up by an XP system – earn your survival points and spend them in different areas to build up Lara's skills and abilities. It helps to form the overarching feeling that she is a character who develops; who gets better at what it is she has to do and finishes the game more like the Lara we know from previous games in the series. Stewart clarifies from a less mechanical standpoint: "Lara's experiences on the island will create a deep and vivid experience for the player, who will go through what Lara has to do to survive, and witness her character evolve as a result. She will go from an inexperienced, vulnerable, lone 21-year-old in a hostile environment, to a heroine equipped with the skills and motivation to fight back, and the will to survive."

For all the criticism that can be levelled at what we've seen of *Tomb Raider*, there's plenty to be genuinely excited about, and just as much that shows – for all its potentially misguided or questionably implemented elements – Crystal Dynamics knows what it's doing. Then, of course, comes the time factor, with the build we saw being some nine months removed from its planned release date in 2013, meaning there's a lot of time for potential problems to be ironed out.

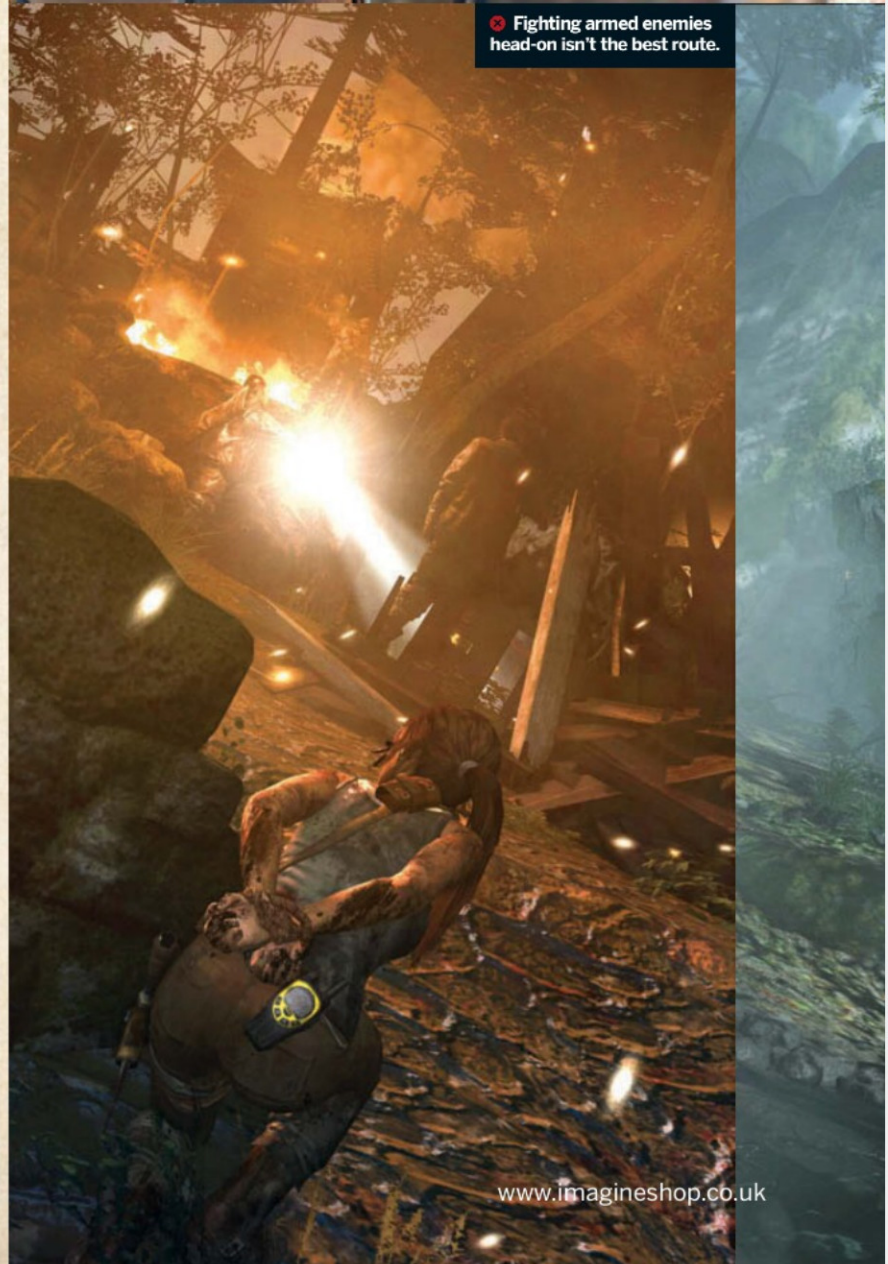
One area in which *Tomb Raider* is an unmitigated success is its atmosphere: you can almost smell the dirt coating >



“The whole game is really about survival – it's a key theme”



✖ Fighting armed enemies head-on isn't the best route.

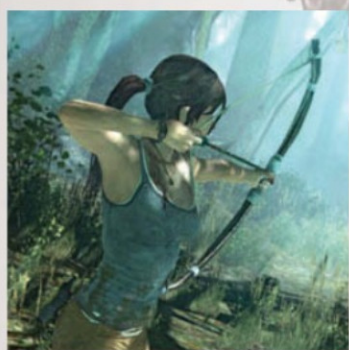




✖ It wouldn't be *Tomb Raider* without exploring some ruins.



✖ Trapping enemies and animals is essential to survival.



HUNTING BOW

This will be Lara's new method of attacking, replacing dual pistols as her 'trademark' weapon. They essentially serve the same purpose, though. At one point, Lara gets her foot caught in a bear trap and fights off wolves with the bow and arrow.

DUAL PISTOLS

What's happened with Lara's dual pistols? Are we ever going to see them again? The question was put to Karl Stewart, who cryptically replied: "Never say never!"

One pistol definitely features in the game. We'll have to wait and see if Lara ends *Tomb Raider* packing two.

BANDAGES

It's clear that Lara takes a beating during the course of this game, and her wounds will need to be tended. Mercifully, there's nothing as annoying as the first aid in *Metal Gear Solid 3*.

LARA CROFT'S SURVIVAL KIT

GREEN PENDANT

The pendant is something she acquires during *Tomb Raider*, as she's shown without it at the start but wearing it in screenshots taken later on. So what is it? What does it mean? Knowing *Tomb Raider*, there will be a certain mythology tied in with it...



WALKIE TALKIE

Lara isn't completely without allies on the island, and she'll be able to stay in touch with them via radio. Who knows? It might come in handy for listening in on enemy communications as well...

ICE AXE

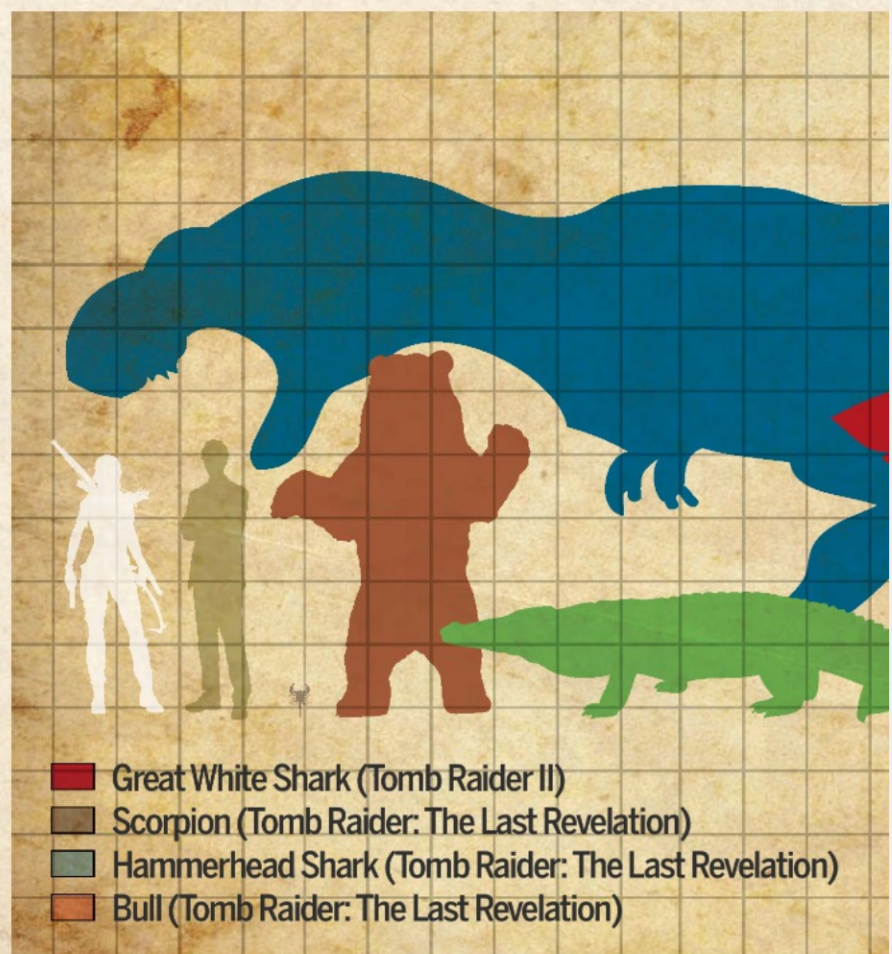
Initially found in a slab of meat, this is mostly used as a tool to progress, such as a door that needs prying open. Lara says she needs to upgrade her axe at one point, which obviously means the item can be improved or replaced, but we're not sure how that will work yet.

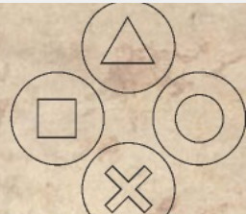
TOMB RAIDER

“ Survival horror? Open world?
Traditional Tomb Raider? We're getting
a fuller picture as time progresses,
and it has impressed and intrigued ”



Lost World War II vehicles in the jungle.
When does Nathan Drake turn up?





> Lara, those friendly to her, those trying to kill her and pretty much everything else. One particular section that saw Lara walking around underground caverns, searching for the other members of her makeshift team, was a particular highlight – even though it was just walking, the claustrophobia and tension is palpable. More like this and you have the recipe for a successful reinvention of Lara.

And that's precisely what Crystal Dynamics is trying to do, as Stewart points out: "This game begins with a new Lara Croft – a version of the character audiences have not seen before. She's 21 years of age, just out of university, searching for adventure on her first real archaeological expedition. We wanted to give her context and depth, and show the steps that she goes to become a hero, a survivor." As if that's not enough to clarify who is the star here, he goes on: "Lara is squarely the game's hero, and we're telling her origin story, and though she's been given friends and allies and enemies who compel her to move through the story, this is definitely her story."

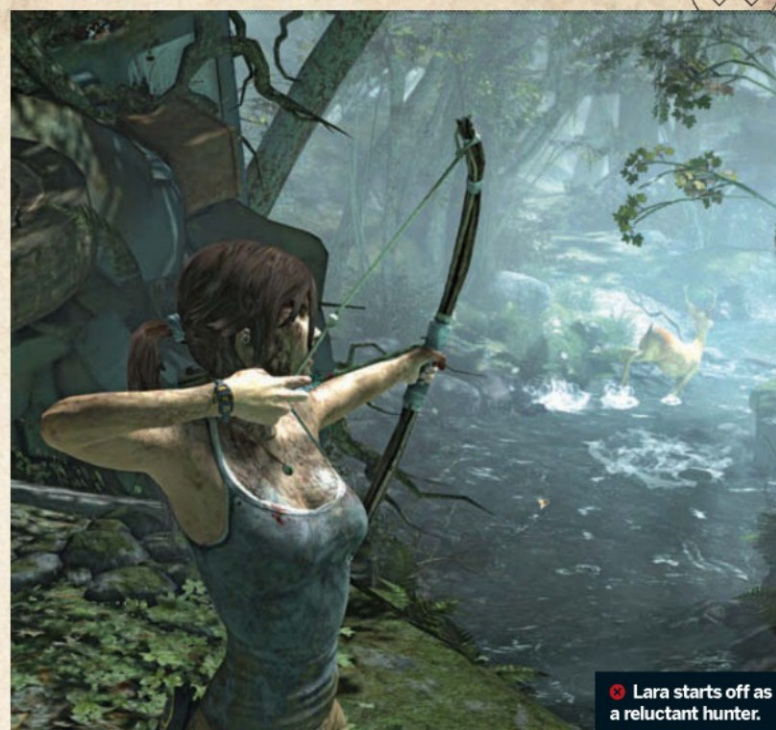
But something that has grabbed the attention of those keeping an eye on *Tomb Raider* has been the island itself. As mentioned, it's atmospheric, it looks wonderful, and it presents a situation unlike the traditional experience of this series. And Crystal Dynamics is keen to make sure we know this is Lara's story, but the island itself is just as important.

"The island location is key for us," says Stewart. "We have a system of hubs, or

island locations for the player to explore. So far we have only really hinted at the scope of these – the night hub shown at E3 2011, and the hunting area shown at E3 2012 – but the idea is that these areas allow the player to grow and understand how to move around, scavenge and collect."

But, much as some might want it to, that doesn't mean *Tomb Raider* is a total sandbox experience, he clarifies: "We are not an open-world game, but we do allow a feeling of freedom to explore and move around in these spaces. There's plenty of scope for exploration and discovery. Though not an open-world game by any means, the island Lara finds herself on is full of areas to explore and secrets to discover, particularly as Lara starts to develop her gear and skill set."

Mixed messages is a theme surrounding *Tomb Raider* right now, from the controversies surrounding what looks like but has been denied as being attempted rape, through the far less serious concerns of what exactly the game wants to be. Survival horror? Open world? Traditional *Tomb Raider*? We're getting a fuller picture as time progresses, and while what we've seen hasn't blown anyone away, it has impressed and it has intrigued. For a reboot of a popular character and



Lara starts off as a reluctant hunter.

franchise, we couldn't ask for much more. Apart from more dinosaurs.

Stewart isn't willing to throw us a bone here, though: "I can say that the enemies do tend to be more grounded in what could realistically be found on such an island, so no dinosaurs this time."

Oh well. There's always next time. ✕

“ Though not an open-world game by any means, the island Lara finds herself on is full of areas to explore and secrets to discover, particularly as Lara starts to develop her gear and skill set ”

LARA CROFT vs THE ANIMAL KINGDOM

We've played through the whole *Tomb Raider* series, and as a result we doubt we can be surprised by anything the new one can throw at us. Considering that Lara is an unwilling hunter in the new game, offering whispered apologies to her prey, let's marvel at the menagerie of rare, endangered and extinct – well, if they weren't before they are now – species that she's ruthlessly removed from the face of the earth...



Grizzly Bear (Tomb Raider)
T-Rex (Tomb Raider)
Crocodile (Tomb Raider)
People (Tomb Raider)

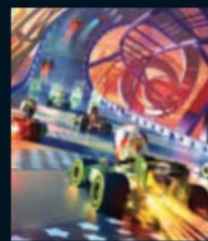
Panther (Tomb Raider)
Wolf (Tomb Raider)
Gorilla (Tomb Raider)
Deer (Tomb Raider 2013)

Doberman (Tomb Raider II)
Monkey (Tomb Raider III)
Vulture (Tomb Raider III)
Eagle (Tomb Raider II)

Install

Where fact + opinion ÷ PlayStation = the truth

Need To Know



F1 Race Stars revealed "Wouldn't this be great if it had more colour and loop-the-loops and stuff?" is something we never said playing F1 games, as we were too busy apologising for crashing into other drivers. But hey! Here it is and it looks pretty nice. Imagine F1 by Codies but accessible, bright, buoyant and fun.

HOW VITA WILL LEAD PS4

Worried that your lovely PS Vita is about to become nothing more than an expensive paperweight that also, in fairness, plays the best version of FIFA in the last few years? Worry no longer, as Sony's portable wonder could well be the saving grace of both PS3 and PS4

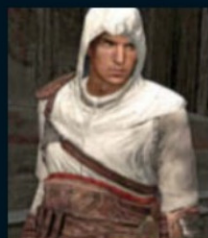


IMPORTANT GAMING NEWS YOU CANNOT AFFORD TO MISS



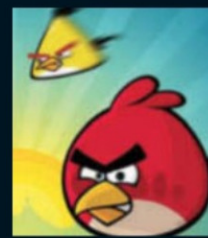
Another Walking Dead game emerges

Walking Dead games are like buses! You wait for one and it turns up on time and takes you into town. Or something. Anyway, this *Walking Dead* game will be an FPS where you play as Daryl Dixon, and the emphasis is on survival. Sounds like *Dead Island*.



Prometheus star leads Assassin's Creed film

Michael Fassbender, star of *Prometheus* and *Magneto* in *X-Men: First Class*, has signed up to co-produce and star in the movie adaptation of *Assassin's Creed*. He'll play Desmond, but there's still no word on when filming will take place.



Angry Birds hitting Move

Angry Birds Trilogy will be hitting PS3 later in the year when *Angry Birds*, *Angry Birds Seasons* and *Angry Birds Rio* are fused together and adapted for Move. Activision will be publishing, with "new cinematics, extras and other entertaining content", which is about as exciting to us as stale doughnuts.



BRINGS WII U TECH TO PS4

Wii U's controller is focused on touch – swiping, stabbing, tickling (perhaps). That's a trick the PS Vita has also pulled off, but it has two advantages the Wii U doesn't: it works on the move and it's backed by the muscle of PlayStation 4.

With a little bit of planning, developers can create PS4 games that are swiped onto the Vita and playable on the move. This was first attempted with PSP's Remote Play gimmick, but not enough developers were on board, owing to the technical differences between the platforms.

Imagine using your Vita to stream the game you've been playing at home via any network in the world. So you have games that look gorgeous on tech that rivals Wii U that would be fully compatible with PlayStation 4, a console built with support for PS Vita in mind. It's enough to give Nintendo nightmares.

PS4 GAMES MADE BETTER

When a game actually makes smart use of the touch screen, it makes a world of difference to the game itself. And now that you can use it to control elements of PS3 games, it's likely to be even better.

LittleBigPlanet is a key example of this. Using the Vita you can build and populate worlds on the PS3 version of the game. No faffing with menus; you just build as if you were making it out of Lego. Intuitive use of the tech, making games better.

For PS4, Sony needs to kick this up a notch by bringing Vita in more often. Customising parts in *Gran Turismo*? Dicking around in your inventory in *The Last Of Us*? Sounds good to us.

IS IT PS4'S SECOND SCREEN?

'Asymmetric gaming'. It's a phrase that's everywhere at the moment, but it does mark an important step in the evolution of the console format as a whole.

First, a quick definition: asymmetric gaming is where both players are doing different things in the same game. For example, the Spec Ops missions in *Modern Warfare 3*, with one player sniping while the other defuses bombs.

This would work on Vita too. Your backup assassins in *Assassin's Creed III*? Your mate is controlling them on a second screen. Want to fall out with your best mate, Ballotelli-style? Make him the manager in *FIFA* on the second screen, adjusting your tactics and making substitutions on the fly. *Splinter Cell* sticky cam? On your Vita. *Deus Ex* hacking mini-game? Vita. Easy.

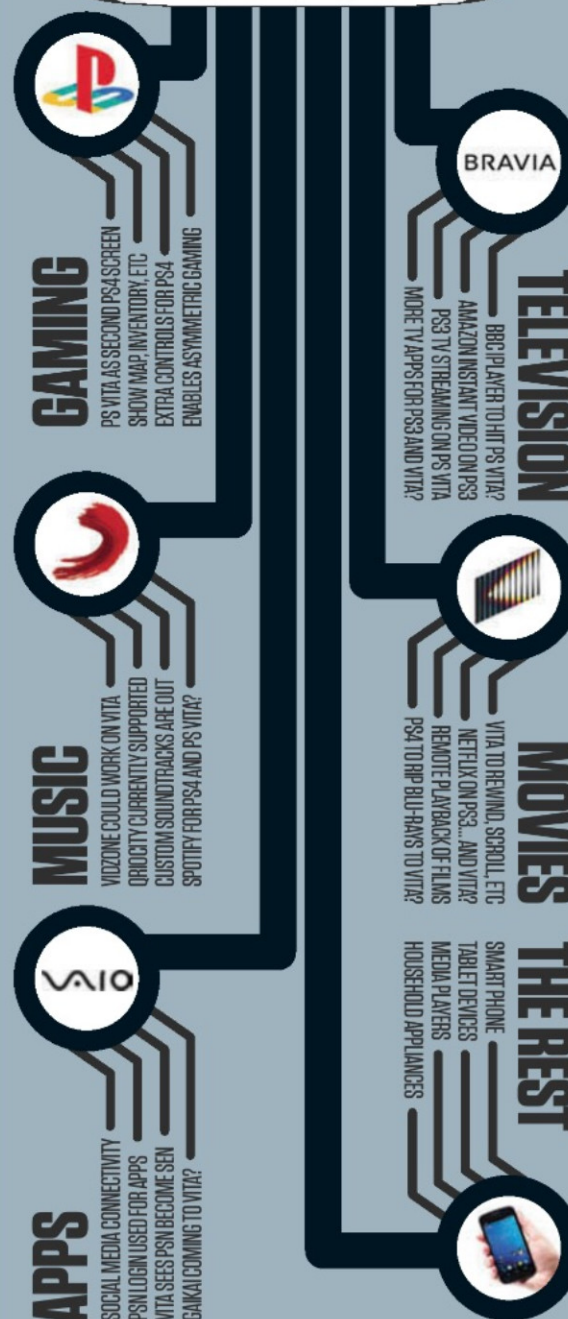
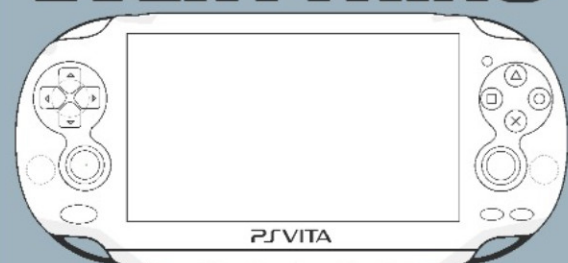
VITA IS PS4

Well, obviously it's not actually PlayStation 4, but it could become a vital component of it, as Vita becomes Sony's answer to Nintendo's Wii U and Microsoft's SmartGlass app.

Vita is powerful enough to do a decent job at replicating all but the very top-end console games. Imagine using your PS4 as a server that you keep at home and that happens to have a Blu-ray drive. Now imagine your Vita is the portable part of that equation: you simply pair it with whatever PS4 you encounter and off you go. The Vita carries your saves, game data, everything. Vita is your first glimpse at the future.

That also means PS4. We'd be shocked if we couldn't use our Vita to control it in a far more sophisticated way than what we're seeing now.

HOW PS VITA WILL CONTROL EVERYTHING



facebook
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Was that a live-action trailer? *drool*
SANDY WALLER

It has the potential to be something very special in a good way.
LEE HEATHER

I will probably end up buying this when it ends up cheapish. I don't like buying games I'm not sure I'll enjoy for a high price, because then I can't buy other cheap games that I will like.
THOMAS DAVIS

It looks epic. I have been waiting forever for a new Quantic Dream game and now my dream has come true.
REECE WARD

Looks set to be an epic action romp with a hefty amount of emotion and morality thrown in for good measure. As long as she doesn't run around screaming "JASON!" then I'll buy it!
JAMIE GREEN

YouTube
youtube.com/PlayMagUK

I only play games for story and other key qualities and it was just by coincidence that the PS3 and the handhelds by Sony have those games. Like *LittleBigPlanet*, *Uncharted*, *Heavy Rain*, *Journey*, *Shadow Of The Colossus HD*, *Metal Gear Solid 4*, etc, etc. Most of their games are heavily story-based or artistic and creative.
SHAMEFUL SAMMY

I didn't play *Heavy Rain* but have been wanting to see what Quantic Dream's next IP was. I might just get this. What about a new IP from Guerrilla Games?
DADADA486

Okay, based on a cursory glance, young kid, psychic powers, trouble with the law, a goddamned motorcycle, slowly getting intoxicated by her powers. Smells like *Akira* to me... Looks brilliant, though!
HENN3H

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twitter.com/PlayMag_UK

@CHARLOTTEINABOX
BBBBBBEYYYYYYYONNNNNNNNNND!!! *cough* I'm not that excited about it. Really. *cough*

@DAMOHOWARD
Looks to be as good as *Heavy Rain*. Great acting by the looks. However, what I want to know is will we get a 'Jason' section?

@WANNA300454
Seemed pretty cool, and Quantic Dream has surprised me with *Heavy Rain*. I won't buy it on day one but I will be interested.

@SPECTRALHANDS
Looks good, as long as Ellen Page retains that level of silence throughout the entire game.

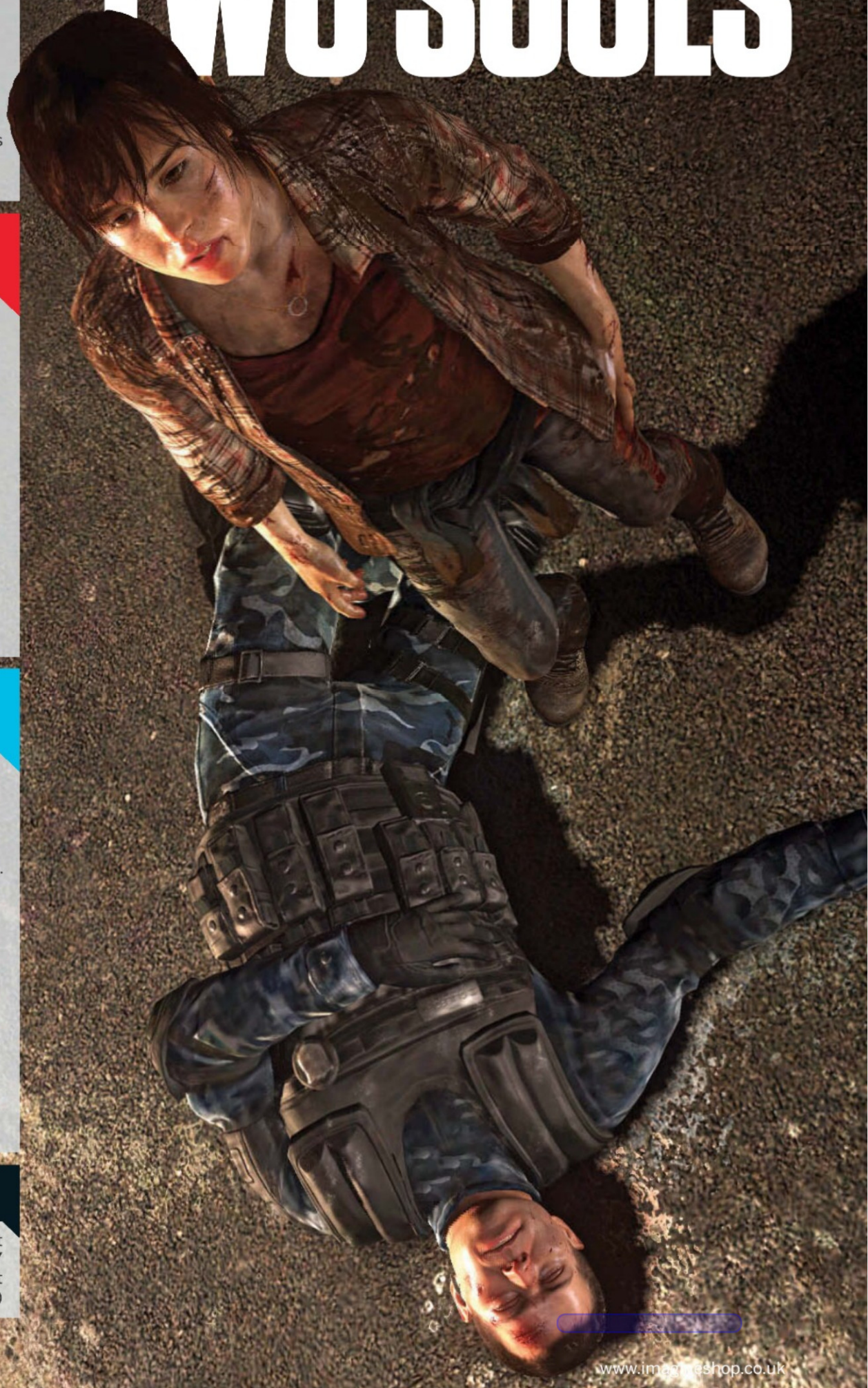
@HANKBIZZLE
It looks amazing; can't wait for it! Though it does look kinda spooky and I scare easily!

Play Online

Want your voice to be heard? Then scream louder at facebook.com/PlayMagazineUK, youtube.com/PlayMagUK and [@PlayMag_UK](https://twitter.com/PlayMag_UK), where we hang out when not doing work (ie. all the time)



BEYOND: TWO SOULS



GTA V grand theft auto **NEW SCREENS**

FIVE THINGS WE'VE LEARNED

Rockstar dumps new media and info on our table. Drink in our GTA knowledge!

THERE IS NO BETA

1 "There is absolutely no 'beta' test for the game," said Rockstar about *GTA V*. "If you see ads or solicitations to join a beta program, beware as this could be a dodgy online phishing scam. Your best bet is to only trust information as official if you're seeing it announced here at the Rockstar Newswire."

PLANES ARE BACK

2 This isn't even anything to do with the screenshots, in case you're looking at that helicopter and thinking we're idiots. No, we know planes are back because Rockstar said so. "The city was simply too small for effective and enjoyable flying," it said, referring to *GTA IV*. "Fear not, they are returning in what is our biggest open-world game to date."

ROCKSTAR DOESN'T UNDERSTAND ITS OWN RUMOURS

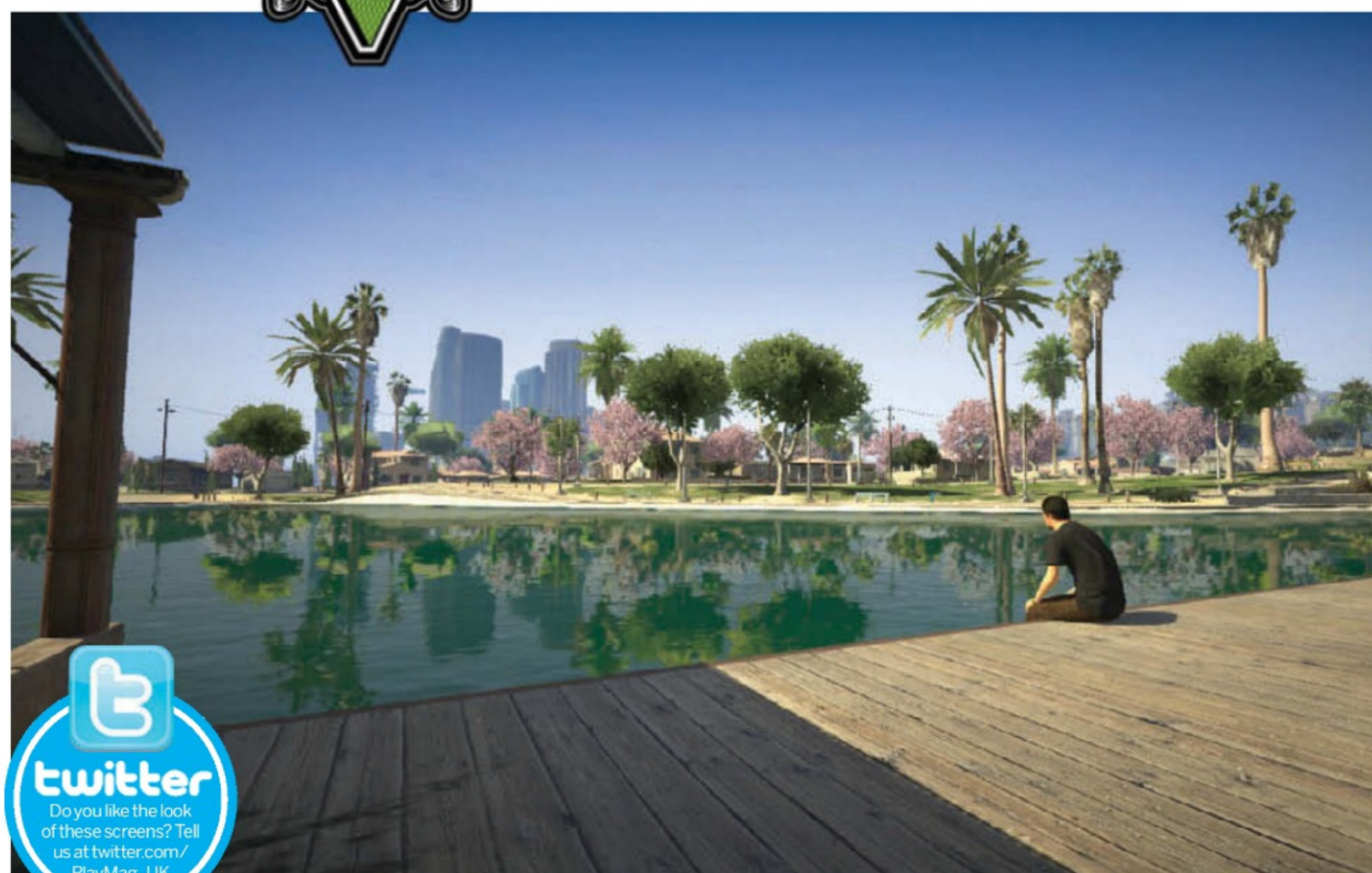
3 "Now that we've announced *GTA V*, all the way up until game launch and probably beyond there is going to be no shortage of non-stop hoaxes, faked footage and screens, rampant rumours and speculation. As a rule, we are not going to get into the game of confirming or denying each of these as they happen, as there is simply too much of it. Half of them we don't even understand – for example, we have no idea what 'the build model' is, so have no idea if it is complete or not!"

THE RELEASE IS A LONG WAY OFF

4 "We have often had long gaps between asset releases on previous games and will continue to do so in the future," Rockstar explained. "We are sorry if you find this frustrating, but please understand, we don't do this because we 'don't care about our fans' 'don't respect our fans' 'hate *GTA* fans', etc – precisely the opposite! We do it because we want to make sure we only release 100 per cent correct information, and because we want to keep plenty back for the actual game release so there are still lots of surprises when you play it. The only things we care about are that you enjoy the experience of playing the game and that we release accurate information. We just have not been in a position to show more of the game than the trailer and will not be for a while yet."

GTA III AND VICE CITY PSN EXCLUSIVES?

5 The ESRB has re-rated *Grand Theft Auto III* and *GTA: Vice City* for PSN release, and while there's no word on when this is happening, it looks like these will be exclusive. Rockstar says: "Due to compatibility issues and other technical limitations, we do not have any plans to make *Grand Theft Auto III* or *Vice City* available on the Xbox Live Marketplace." Have they become PS3 exclusives? Seems that way.



INSTALL

Playable PlayStation animals



Dog's Life (Dog)

"You can play as 15 different breeds of dog, use smellovision, wee on things and generally be a dog in *Dog's Life*!"

"But... you guys made *Frontier: Elite II*, one of the best games ever made..."

"Yeah, and now dogs!"

This is how the pitch for *Frontier's Dog's Life* must have gone down.



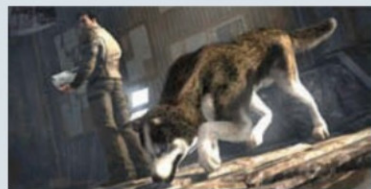
Tekken (Bear/Panda)

Everyone has their favourite on *Tekken*, but only those with true heart and soul love the best characters: Alex, Roger, Gon, Panda and Kuma. Especially the last two, though we have a special place in our heart for a boxing raptor. Kuma, however, leads us on to...



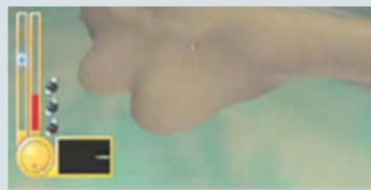
Kuma Uta (Bear)

The best game ever made featuring a jacket-sporting, singing bear! *Kuma Uta*, meaning 'Bear Song', is a game in which a bear sings and... it's just not worth talking about. Get on YouTube and see it for yourself – that's the only way to do *Kuma Uta* justice.



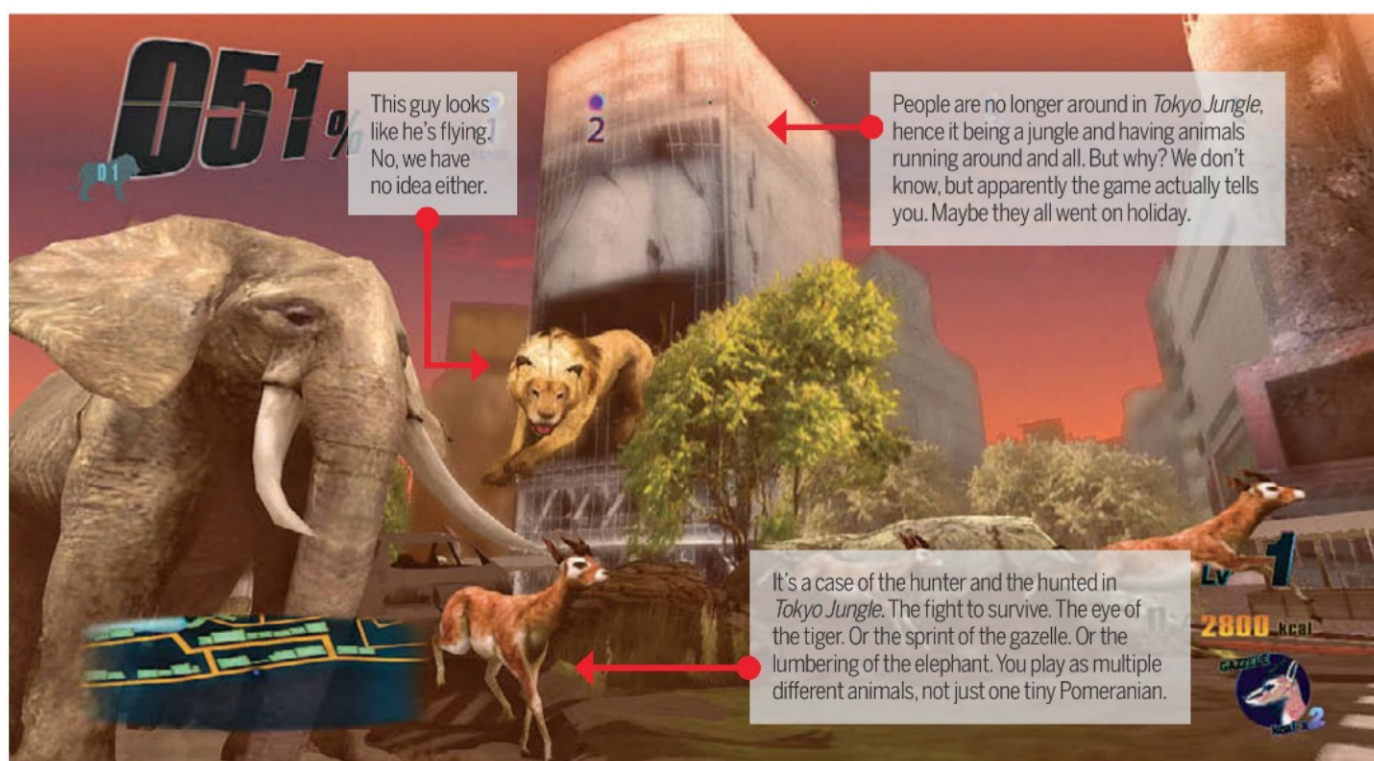
Dead To Rights (Dog)

It's not too weird a game, *Dead To Rights*, but when you throw in the fact that the dog doesn't have a bum and the preoccupation with 'testikills', you enter rather strange territory. Strange, vaguely funny, sometimes hilarious territory.



Mr Mosquito (Mosquito)

A game in which you control a mosquito, terrorising a family by sucking their very blood from their bodies? Yeah, it's a game. That exists. In real life. And it was released on PS2 in Europe, showing once and for all that the past was just as mad as current times.



IS THIS PS3'S WEIRDEST GAME?

Tokyo Jungle will make its way west. Here's why we're excited



This equine chap has been kitted out in some rather sensible racing gear, but you are more than able to dress your animals up in a far stupider fashion. Dogs in hip hop gear, for example. No, really.



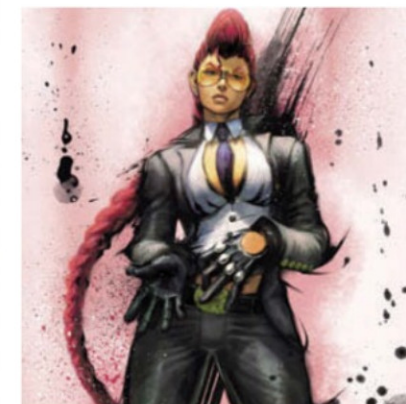
Each different animal you control has a distinct goal: the ex-racehorse just wants to race more, the Pomeranian wants to eat, the dinosaurs have to... wait, what? Ah yes – there are dinosaurs in it too.



You'll be able to control this terrified little blighter at some undefined point in the future, as Sony has confirmed a *Tokyo Jungle* release here in Europe and in the US. So really the gazelle should be jumping for joy, and not bucking out of abject terror. Oh well.

C.VIPER

If you've ever wondered what Crimson Viper would look like in real life, you probably stopped as soon as you looked at this page. Don't thank us. Thank Lindze Merritt!



Why Crimson Viper?

Our family is a HUGE Street Fighter fan family, so I always wanted to cosplay a character from it. When they introduced Crimson Viper, an American who is a mom to a little girl, I knew I had found my perfect character to cosplay, since I'm also an American mom to a little girl. Although I confess I really suck at playing her. She's freaking hard to play!

What was the hardest part of the costume to get right?

The hairpiece. It was hand made by me from scratch with loose hair wefts I had to glue and weave together and then braid. It gets messy after a few times of wearing it too, so I have to rebraid it periodically.

What happens with the costume when you're done?

I usually wear a costume multiple times, but once I've decided to never wear a costume again, I usually sell it on eBay. No use cluttering up my house if I'm not going to wear it!

What happens at the conventions themselves? Do you bump into cosplaying friends and have a superhero lunch in costume?

I have a lot of friends in the scene that I only get to see at conventions, so a lot of the time is spent with them, hanging out. Usually while in costume, a lot of that time is spent getting your picture taken, around the convention centre or hotel. I'm not the type that stays in a costume for 12 hours straight and I'm not super into being in public settings in costume, so I just wait until I get out of costume to do the messy stuff like eating.

What's the strangest cosplay story you have?

I think I've become numb to strange happenings, going to so many conventions. I rarely even notice weirdos any more. If anything, the fact that so much of convention craziness goes unnoticed to me is the strangest thing yet.

What's next on the cosplay list?

My next big costume is Maleficent from Sleeping Beauty. I'm excited about being terrifying to small children.

PES COMEBACK?

Why a new engine could bring PES back to the top of the league



OH LOOK, IT'S suddenly 2012. When did that happen, eh? Probably when we were wasting our lives watching reality TV and working in jobs we hate. That can happen.

Things have changed when we weren't looking. *Tomb Raider* became a hardcore game about fending off harrowing attacks rather than a good-natured lark where you killed animals for a laugh. *Uncharted*'s success meant every game had to look and play exactly like *Uncharted*. And the *PES* series fell from grace like a drunk riding a donkey. It happens.

Empires rise and fall. Used to be a time when *Sensible Soccer* ruled videogame football with an iron fist, after all. Those days are long gone, and so are the days of *PES* ruling the roost.

To be fair, Konami, after years of sitting around resting on its laurels, has made great strides with *PES 2012*. We're hoping that *PES 2013* will be even better. But it's the announcement that the next-gen iteration will use a different engine and a new producer, that has got us all excited for the fabled Return of *PES*™.

Not that we hate *FIFA*, the current reigning king of making friends bicker like mortal enemies; it's a very good football game, if a little samey after a while. *PES* has coasted on its reputation for years, but it's exactly that reputation that makes us want it to return to its best. Because when *PES* is on form, it's genuinely one of the greatest games ever.

So, with this in mind, what are we hoping for from next-gen *PES* and the Fox Engine? (Yes, that is the same one that is powering *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance*.) Improved animation. Shots that feel like you're kicking a football and not a balloon. Continued use of the best player models in the business – for all its successes, *FIFA*'s players look like they've been carved out of potato by the Incredible Hulk.

More importantly – and this is something we're going to bang on and on and on about until Konami finally gets it – *PES* was always fast. Very, very fast, like footage of Usain Bolt on fast forward or something. Yet it still allowed for tactical play and sweet passing moves. Bring this all back together, along with the mighty *PES* cone challenge and scenario modes, and we're in business.

We're excited about the impact of the new engine, because it feels like *PES* is finally going to be forced to change. And change is good. Unless it's to the game speed. Then we'll be mad.

“ PES has coasted on its reputation for years, but it's exactly that reputation that makes us want it to return to its best ”



INSTANT EXPERT

THE LAST OF US

How is Naughty Dog putting a fresh spin on the apocalypse?

PURE FACT

The Last Of Us will have multiplayer, it has been confirmed. A straight-up deathmatch? We're not sure. Capture the beans, with everyone working to get the tin that will keep them alive another week? No idea. But it's been confirmed, it exists, and there's more detail to come.

PURE CO-OP

Another element of multiplayer confirmed is the fact that co-operative play will be present, though it won't mean we get to play the whole campaign with Joel and Ellie controlled by real people. Again, Naughty Dog is being cagey on details, but the confirmation is good enough for us so far.

PURE UNOBTRUSIVENESS

Naughty Dog is keen to point out that while the AI is always in control of Ellie, it won't get in your way or slow you down in any way. 'Strong AI' is a focus for the studio, and it's going to great lengths to make sure your young charge doesn't ruin things through shoddy coding.

PURE SURPRISE

We were among those voicing our concern when multiplayer was announced for *Uncharted 2* – we saw it as a feature that didn't 'fit'. We were wrong. As such, *The Last Of Us*'s multiplayer is one of those elements that we're actually looking forward to. Which is a grand success.

PURE NON-IGNORANCE

While Ellie has been created to stay out of the way and not hold players back, she is still an integral character. She's necessary. She's useful. She helps out in combat, she's useful in puzzles and she generally helps Joel not die. She's a classic sidekick, really. And hopefully not an annoying one.

PURE FANTASY

In an ideal world we would see a multiplayer world not unlike breakout PC hit *DayZ*, with many players inhabiting the same post-apocalyptic world. We could fight over supplies, form hasty alliances and collectively brick ourselves when the zombie mutants turn up. Alas, it is but fantasy.

PURE WIDE LINEAR

Yes, folks, it's new buzzword time. This time it's 'wide linear', describing how *The Last Of Us* plays out. Basically it means situations are always encountered, but can be tackled in a number of different ways, with enemies reacting accordingly. Sounds fine by us – just less of the buzz nonsense, thanks.

PURE RELEASE

There's still not been a definite date put on *The Last Of Us* at the time of writing, but murmurs have turned into confirmation from Naughty Dog that the game will arrive 'some time' in 2013. It's not concrete, sure, but it puts our minds a bit more at ease. We'd guess October next year.

THREE OF THE BEST (AND WORST) SIDEKICKS

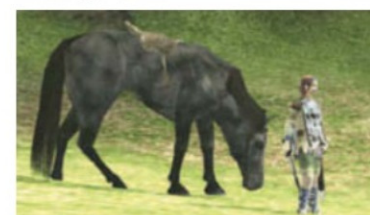
Naughty Dog is aiming to make Ellie a good sidekick in *The Last Of Us*. So here are three good and three bad examples, just for the hell of it

THE BEST

THE DARKLING
(*The Darkness II*)
He stays out of the way, he can be used as a weapon, he's integral to the storyline and he wees on corpses. Brilliant.



REX
(*Fallout: New Vegas*)
Imagine a dog, right, that's part robot, right, and has a brain you can see, yeah? Sound brilliant? It is. Also it can kill mutants with you. Best dog ever.



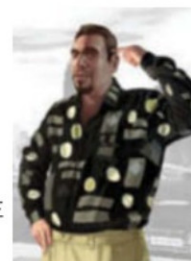
AGRO (*Shadow Of The Colossus*)
The horse never stops helping, the horse never stops trying, and even when the horse is about to die, it still does its best to help. Even though you're being a dimwit. What a horse.

THE WORST

TAILS
(*Sonic series*)
He has his fans, but they're all idiots. Tails is rubbish and just serves to take attention away from better characters, like Sonic and... hmmm...



ROMAN BELLIC
(*Grand Theft Auto IV*)
Shut up. Stop ringing us. We don't care. We don't want to bowl. Leave us alone. STOP IT. WE HOPE YOU DIE... oh. Oops.



HK-47
(*Star Wars: Knights Of The Old Republic*)
This guy is actually the single best sidekick of all time, but he's not available on PlayStation, so we feel betrayed and we hate him. Sorry, robo-bro.

INSTALL

TOP 5 GAMES FOR 4 PEOPLE

There are games for 32 players, 16 players, 7 players, even 256 players, but the best number, as proven by science, is four players. It's the best for fun, the best to keep friendships strong, the best for everything, so here are some games fresh for four-player action



1 BORDERLANDS

One of the undisputed kings of four-player gaming, *Borderlands* is made with the co-operative mechanic as a central function. Sure, you can play alone if you want, but there's not much better than making a 'take whatever you want' loot pile with three other friends. That's not as dirty as it sounds.



2 MASS EFFECT 3

It's not the best, but it's certainly one of the most surprisingly adept and caught us off-guard with how tactical it can be. Use your asari to freeze him so my Vanguard can rush him while being backed up by a stealthy salarian and your mate Barry sits around being useless, you say? Yeah, why not.

3 LITTLEBIGPLANET 2

When people talk about *LittleBigPlanet 2*, they often focus on the creation aspect of the title. While that obviously deserves a lot of attention, there's something to be said for its four-player mode too – bring the created genius to you and friends, you see. That and the created rubbish.



4 ROCK BAND SERIES

If you haven't played a *Rock Band* or *Guitar Hero* game properly – four of you in a room together, belting out whatever crap the singer has decided they 'can sing' – you're doing games wrong. As such, stop reading this and go do games right. Really – go. Do it now.



5 MGS: PEACE WALKER

The main failing of *Peace Walker*'s four-player mode was the fact that it relied on you having three friends with PSPs. The main anti-failing of its four-player mode, though, was that it's bloody brilliant and turns it into a totally different game, working together for the common, Snakey good.

TEAM PICKS Our favourite four-player games



STEVE PES 6

Because, as I'll happily tell you at length if you ask, it's the best multiplayer game of all time, and breaking out the multimap for some two-on-two action is the only way to play it. Later.



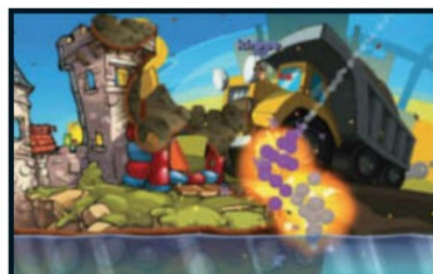
RYAN DEAD ISLAND

I like the bit where the fat guy goes "WHO DO YOU VOODOO, BITCH!" and you're all like "LOL WHO DO YOU VOODOO BITCH!" and then you steal money from luggage and then the other three players watch and sigh.



IAN CALLING ALL CARS!

That thing David Jaffe's team did that wasn't *Twisted Metal* was quite a bit like *Micro Machines*. It's also superb fun with four people, though you can't play online any more, just locally.



ANDY WORMS 2: ARMAGEDDON

This proves once and for all that the most violent species on the planet is not man but worm. I pray for a day without worm-on-worm violence, but until then let's throw sheep and bananas at each other.

PARAPPA



Everybody's favourite rapping dog in a beanie will have his work cut out for him in PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale. But he, if anyone, has the power of unwavering faith in the concept of hope. He's a believer, after all

KICK, PUNCH, IT'S ALL IN THE MIND

In the grand scheme of things, we really didn't expect to be living with the knowledge that PaRappa will appear in an upcoming Sony brawler in the vein of *Super Smash Bros*. Mainly because – and we might repeat this a few times – he's a rapping dog in a beanie. Still, he has been announced and shown as a playable character, squaring up to the likes of Nathan Drake, Kratos and a Helghan trooper. In 1996, when *PaRappa The Rapper* first came out, we probably didn't see this coming.

YOU GOTTA DO WHAT?

Have we mentioned PaRappa says "I gotta believe!" enough yet? Probably not. Did you know PaRappa's catchphrase is "I gotta believe!"? Because it is. It would be a consideration to make – how a rapping dog in a beanie and baggy jeans would be able to defeat a military-trained *Killzone* trooper in one-on-one combat – but then, he's overcome greater obstacles just by uttering his need for belief. Plus, as we all know, his ability to fight is all in the mind, what with this kicking and punching lark.

WHOA HO HO HO, STOP THE CAR!

The history of PaRappa is a long one. Popping up in a *Simon*-style music game in 1996, he was the main character in the game that pretty much invented the rhythm-action genre: *PaRappa The Rapper*. A few years later came the spin-off, *UmJammer Lammy*, which still featured our favourite rapping dog in a beanie, even with a new main character, and then came the PS2 full sequel in the shape of *PaRappa The Rapper 2*. But we don't talk about that one, because it wasn't amazing, unlike the first two releases.

RIBBIT, RIBBIT, ME CAN'T HOLD IT

PaRappa – the rapping dog in a beanie – had a somewhat uncertain future. Still has, in fact. We saw him pop up when Sony made us a 200th issue special edition cover print, and now he's popped up again in *PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale*. But does this point to a future for the pooch? It certainly shows that one of our favourite characters of the PlayStation era hasn't been forgotten by his bosses – and all we need now is for Masaya Matsuura and Rodney Greenblat to reunite like they haven't done since... *Major Minor's Majestic March* on Wii, which came out in 2009. There's still hope.

BEHIND EVERY GREAT RAPPING DOG...

...is a collection of great rapping, singing, dancing, stupid, smart, funny characters. The PaRappa games and their spin-off have produced some of the most memorable in gaming, like...



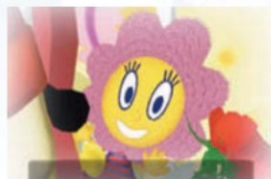
THIS LOT

There's just not enough space to get in everyone, so why not start with most characters from the first game? Inspector Mooselini, Prince Fleaswallow, Cheap Cheap The Cooking Chicken – it's... well, it means a lot if you know the game.



CHOP CHOP MASTER ONION

He owns a dojo, he loses his dojo, he gets his dojo back in his mind, he teaches you how to love – Chop Chop is the eternal teacher, knower of all and a bit smelly. He's the only teacher to appear in every game.



SUNNY FUNNY

Love of PaRappa's life, a ray of sunshine in the day of our confidence-lacking hero, and the impetus behind all this self-improvement nonsense. Also she wants to jump his bones when he's desperately trying to hold in a big poo. No, really.



PJ BERRI

The character we can all relate to – a lazy bear who likes to eat all the time. PJ is a modern day role model for those of us with a less active disposition. Most of us, then. He's also living a secret double life as a master DJ, but don't tell anyone.



LAMMY

Taking over from PaRappa in the lead role on one game in the series, Lammy is a clumsy, ever-late scatterbrain – but an absolute badass on guitar. So we'll let her off for those transgressions, as 'shredding the axe' is cool.



RODNEY GREENBLAT

All of the lovely artwork adorning this page wouldn't be possible were it not for the stylings of Rodney Alan Greenblat. And that includes the image accompanying this entry, which we're definitely not just crowbarbing in here.

Re:Play

You are the controller! But only on these pages

Write to us and help shape the games of tomorrow while misunderstanding our letters of yesterday! Or last month, rather. But seriously, send us drawings and we'll probably print them. We're simple creatures.

CONTACT US

EMAIL

play@imagine-publishing.co.uk

FACEBOOK

www.facebook.com/PlayMagUK

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Imagine Publishing
Richmond House
33 Richmond Hill
Bournemouth
Dorset
BH2 6EZ

★ LETTER

SURVIVAL HORROR IS DEAD

I've stayed silent about this for many years now – others haven't but I have – but now I'm going to throw my hat into the ring. You reviewed *Operation Raccoon City* and I feel, without actually having played the game for myself, that your score of 33% was well deserved. There was something else that caught my eye, though. On page 20, there's a boxout labelled 'Four Terrible Genre Changes' in which you use *ORC* as an example. You claim that *Resident Evil* had gone from survival horror to squad-based shooter. This is where I must disagree; it's gone from action horror to squad-based shooter.

Now I know it borders on heresy these days to not show that game anything but love and adoration, but I can't even justify calling it a *Resident Evil*. I am, admittedly, a staunch traditionalist when it comes to survival horror;

I grew up with the original *Resident Evil* and *Silent Hill* games and I'll be the first to admit that my view is somewhat biased, but there are precious few attributes of survival horror that I can see in any *Resident Evil* released after, and including, 4, with the possible exception of *Revelations* – though, again, I haven't played it. I know a lot of people congratulated Capcom for changing what was seen as a stale genre, and I wouldn't have minded so much if the change weren't so radical. I could go into a lengthy diatribe but I'll just give you the CliffsNotes:

If you took out Leon, Wesker and I suppose Ada as well, how much resemblance would 4 have to any *Resident Evil* before it?

How did it advance the overall story of *Resident Evil* aside from saying 'Umbrella's gone' and leaving it at that?

Excluding *Parasite Eve 2*, when was currency of any kind used in any survival horror before 4?

Where was the survival aspect of it?

I could go on, though if I'm wrong on any point then please let me know. This doesn't just apply to 4 but to the rest too. I actually enjoyed 5; I still can't classify it as a *Resident Evil* but at least it had a relevant storyline. If Capcom was insistent on releasing a game like 4, I wish they had created a new franchise to do it and left *Resident Evil* alone, but there's little that can be done about that now aside from complaining. I know survival horror isn't really dead, as *Silent Hill*'s still keeping the flame burning – well, it's trying to – and there are a few other titles that do the label justice, but all in all I feel that survival horror has been passed over in favour of more mainstream (read: profitable) genres, and it saddens me to see a once great genre reduced to its simplest form.

Simon Dodd

All very good points. We'd say that survival horror, as we knew it, is dead. For various reasons, the genre has allowed action to seep in – profitability (*Resident Evil 5* is the biggest-selling in the series), trends (action and co-op), marketing (fast-paced action trailers versus slow-paced survival horror) and so on. PlayStation 2 was definitely the console where the genre was at its best – *Silent Hill*, *Forbidden Siren*, *Clock Tower*, *Haunting Ground*, *Fatal Frame* and so on – so the best we can hope for are PSN re-releases of the old classics, as it doesn't seem like publishers are interested in creating new ones.



You Tube
www.youtube.com/
PlayMagUK

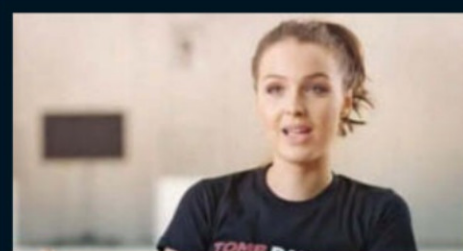
Things you may have missed on our YouTube page



**TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT 2:
NEW CHARACTERS TRAILER**



**THE EXPENDABLES 2:
BODY COUNT TRAILER**



**TOMB RAIDER:
FINAL HOURS DOCUMENTARY**



Write in, and win! Every letter we print receives a free game. This month, the sender wins one of the Sega Vintage Collection titles recently released on PSN: Super Hang-On, Revenge Of Shinobi, Alex Kidd In Miracle World and various Wonder Boy titles. They're rather spiffing ports of ye olde classics.

ROCKSTEADY COMMENTS ON READER DRAWINGS

I have played all the *Batman* games and I have some ideas for the next game, like Harley Quinn could be the main villain and there could be new villains. I have made my own. He is called Red Panther and for a new hero Black Panther. They are brothers that hate each other. I think Rocksteady should make you be able to go to Gotham and Arkham City. I had some ideas for the costumes and they're quite cool. I thought after you complete the game, you unlock co-op and you can make your own scene and play on it. Looking forward to seeing what the new *Batman* game has in store.

Joshua Jones

Given we're about as artistic as a plate of chips, we decided to pass your designs

straight to Rocksteady to see what they had to say. "Thanks so much for sending these over. Joshua has done an amazing job!" said Sarah Wellock of Rocksteady. "The studio was thrilled by his design and his love and support for our games – his designs made our day!"

So there you go, Josh. Rocksteady loves you. Everyone else, get scribbling! Draw new *Tekken* characters, or *God Of War* bosses, or Ian's face, which probably could pass as a *God Of War* boss anyway. Anything will do.



THE BIG ISSUE ARE DEVELOPERS SCARED?

I am in complete and utter disagreement with your reply to Tadzio in the letters section, where you mention "how would *L.A. Noire* be without the violent bits". I am playing that title as I speak and I think "damn, I wish this game DIDN'T have all the unnecessary violent bits!" Actually I think that these days game makers are SCARED to not throw in violence because they know it sells. I think it has become far, far too gratuitous. I love your mag but look just how graphic it is. Endless runs of pages with guns, each page featuring a bigger gun than the last. As I kept turning I expected the last batch of pages to feature just big guns, or perhaps advertisements or endorsements for the latest in fashionable guns! It has

seriously become ridiculous. I'm even whipping out MAME more frequently these days just to have a shot of *Pac-Man* and the like. I'm getting tired of all this bloodshed.

Rob Roemer

Well, you're making the same point we did. Our exact quote was "imagine if *L.A. Noire* was purely about solving murders [...]" sadly, mass market appeal means bringing in conflict and violence." Which is us saying *L.A. Noire* didn't need the extra violent bits and would have been better solely focused on solving murders. And when have we ever had an advert for a fashionable gun? What even is a fashionable gun? Is it a leopard-print shotgun? Or maybe a denim pistol?

facebook

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We take to our Facebook army made up of our nearest and dearest to ask...



Play

If you could recommend just one PS3 game for someone to play, what would it be and why?

Like • Comment • Share • about an hour ago •

SALMAN F. KAMAL *Burnout Paradise*. Variety of cars/bikes and the online challenges are super fun with people!

LEWIS LICHTENBERG All the *Uncharted* games. They are awesome!

JASON UNDERWOOD *Arkham City*. Great story, free-flowing combat, riddle-solving and a decent length too.

MICHAEL RUSSELL *God Of War III*! Awesome graphics, great playability, PlayStation 3 exclusive and it's fricking Kratos!

MITCHELL SABBAG *Fallout 3*. That game was legendary.

PAUL JONES *Uncharted 2*. Some of the best graphics and such a fun game to play.

BECCA LOWE *Red Dead Redemption*. Amazing world, characters and story with fantastic graphics and the best music.

RICHARD MILLER *Mass Effect 3* for depth of characters and end of the galaxy theme was awesome

JOHN SZCZEPANIAK *Ryu Ga Gotoku Kenzan*! Because nothing says cool like a bizarre import-only that few can pronounce properly. Also, samurai. And swords. And geisha. And horseback archery. And hanafuda. And if you eat the turtle food you can totally make yourself be sick so you can go back to a restaurant to eat more after having eaten too much to begin with. Did I mention the swords?



YouTube

Peep the latest trailers and hottest gaming clips at youtube.com/PlayMagUK



NIGHTS:
ANNOUNCEMENT TRAILER



ASSASSIN'S CREED III:
RISE TRAILER



NHL 13:
LAST MAN STANDING TRAILER



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Podcast

The Play team talks games every month
nowgamer.com/podcasts/nowgamer-podcasts/



COMPETITION CORNER

Do you like jalapenos? We do but they make us feel a bit ill afterwards. We also don't like that guy in the Subway ad who doesn't like jalapenos because "I've got a sensitive mouff awight", so that's two things we don't like about them. The point is we're feeling ill because of jalapenos, and because of that we can't be bothered to find a huge stash of games to give away this month, so have *Dark Souls* and *Mafia II*. They're good consolation prizes. Awight?

WHAT IS PLAY?

A) A miserable pile of secrets. B) The UK's best PlayStation magazine. C) A pizza.

Pop your answer and address to play@imagine-publishing.co.uk with subject header 'Have you been drinking again, Play?'
Confessing is the first step to recovery!

Closing date is 30 August. The winner will be notified by email. Next month: more games. See you then!

twitter

YOU ASK PLAY

www.twitter.com/PlayMag_UK



You ask us questions, we reply on Twitter, then we reply here so everyone else can see, then you ask us more questions. Join in at @PlayMag_UK! Or don't...

@ESLERTHEGAMER Will we ever see a *Dark Cloud 3*?

Very unlikely. Level-5 does make sequels but hasn't shown that it's particularly keen to go all the way back to its older games and make new instalments, so don't hold your breath. If you were holding your breath. Does anyone hold their breath waiting for news? You're giving yourself a one minute at most; maybe more if you have lungs like a walrus. We're guessing you don't. What were we talking about?

@ESCOBLADES Verdict on *Lego Batman 2*?

Why, we have the review in this very issue. Isn't that convenient?

@PSNWORLDHURT Is there going to be a *Vanquish 2*? Really enjoying it at the moment. Boss battles on Hard are BRUTAL...

Unlikely. It wasn't a huge commercial hit and Platinum isn't in the business of

making sequels. In any case, director Shinji Mikami has left Platinum to make a survival horror game of sorts for Bethesda.

@11HUTTY What game would you say resembles working in the Play office the most and why?

Dead Island.

@JORDANCAPASSO DO YOU LIKE GAMES?

They're pretty good.

@RH1169 So is Commander Shepard alive?

Almost definitely. EA will want to push comics, apps, books, DLC and so on. It'll either be 'Shepard is alive! Have more stuff!' or 'Shepard is dead! Have some prequel stuff!'

@HANKBIZZLE You know how fighting games do crossovers and stuff? Do you think we will ever see Sweetwater in a *COD* game?

Nope. EA and Activision combining *Battlefield* and *Call Of Duty*? That's like Sonic and Mario appea... no, wait. That's like *Star Wars* and *SoulCalibur* in the sa... no, wait. Look, it's not happening, all right?

@INSIGHT_2K When is the release date of *Watch Dogs*?

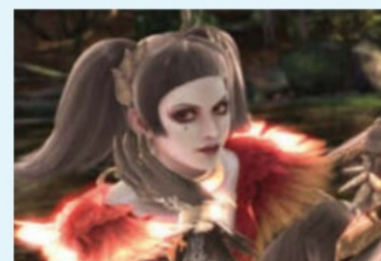
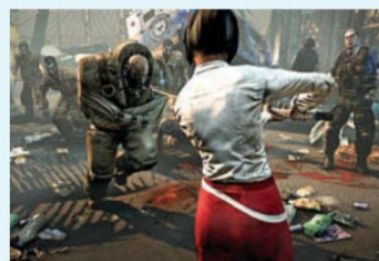
Nothing official, but if we had to guess, end of next year and it'll be on both PlayStation 3 and PlayStation 4.

@PICTOPIRATE What would be your desert island game, assuming it had power obviously.

Escape From Monkey Island, so we know what to do with a rubber chicken with a pulley in the middle.

@ALEXSKINNER95 I'm thinking of purchasing PlayStation Plus over the summer holidays, but I can't work out whether it's actually worth the money.

It is, if only for all the free games.





SPORTS GAMES ARE BORING

Personally, I think that sports games are becoming quite boring. It is all well and good that they bring new and improved ways of playing them and making them more realistic like the Player Impact engine in *FIFA* and better AI, but sometimes I think that making a game to do with sport that is the opposite to realism is more fun. I know that making a sports game more realistic will make it more enjoyable for the consumer, but why not make a game that is 'over the top'?

The only game that I think has done this well, this generation, is *WWE All Stars*, as it keeps the basics of *WWE* but is a lot more exaggerated with the moves that the wrestlers do, and I think that it is more enjoyable to play. Imagine a football game where you can do double backflip bicycle kicks when the ball is crossed in at almost 600 feet in the air, or when you slide tackle another player badly his legs are ripped off in a slowed down and amusing way, or playing a rugby game where you dump tackle

a player into the ground so hard that it leaves a crater. Now I know you are probably thinking 'WHAT?', but it would be different, interesting and it would give the developers more freedom to do what they want and not be confined to the chains of reality.

Adam Cracknell

What's weird is this used to happen in the PlayStation and early PS2 era – *Adidas Power Soccer*, *Red Card Soccer*, *Backyard Soccer* – but they didn't sell well, so publishers stopped. But what we don't get is now PSN exists, why not make cheaper, arcade-style sports games for that?

GETTING MORE MEMORY ON PS3

As a long-time PS3 gamer I have amassed a collection of 60+ games on disc. Due to this and the additional downloadable content and games I only have 2GB of space left on my 320GB HDD. Therefore with anticipation I am thinking of upgrading the HDD to a Western Digital 1TB version. Is it okay to use? Further to

this, I am a PS Plus subscriber. This month it's really taken off, with loads of free games, some of which I have already. However, this leads me on to the next part in that I am considering not buying discs any more and just download-only, albeit at a slightly higher than should be price. Therefore would Sony be able to offer all games as a download in addition to the discs or could there be something on the disc that enables complete install of the game on the HDD, therefore negating the need to keep the disc in a pile near the machine. I could just turn the machine on and play.

Bill

You need to format your HDD as FAT32 for your PS3 to recognise it. Read up on how to do this and if you're confident, you're all set.

As for downloads, it'll be a big part of the future and what you're suggesting isn't unreasonable. Even so, downloading games like *DC Universe Online* would take even longer to play than they do now – are we ready to get rid of physical media altogether yet?



PLAY-MAG.CO.UK

SHUT UP ABOUT LICENSED GAMES

Lego *Batman 2* is out, and somewhere, someone is writing a review with one of those dreary openings along the lines of 'licensed games are historically bad'. (In fairness, we've all done it.)

But maybe we should all shut it about licensed games formerly being a bit guff, because (a) it's as obvious as the fact that humans need oxygen and (b) modern licensed games are, in some instances, far, far better than they've been in the past.

In yе olden days, tie-ins and other licensed tat used to come almost exclusively in one form: the scrolling brawler, where Batman or Superman or Richard Gere from *Pretty Woman* would walk from left to right biffing more people than Joey Barton after 18 cans of Stella.

Now, licensed games are pretty awesome. As with every genre there are duffers floating around, but when developers like Traveller's Tales are cranking out games of the standard of *Lego Batman 2*, it's hard to make the old arguments against them.

TT isn't the only one doing good work either. By and large, High Moon Studios' *Transformers* games have been good. The same studio's *Bourne* game was enjoyable. The upcoming *Spider-Man* tie-in from Play's favourite developer, The Mighty Beenox, is looking solid.

Oh yeah, and those *Batman* games from Rocksteady were pretty special too.

It's a brave new world out there: up is down, black is white, licensed games are good. Scary, we know.



PLAY

Imagine Publishing Ltd
Richmond House 33 Richmond Hill
Bournemouth Dorset BH2 6EZ
☎ +44 (0) 1202 586200
Web: www.play-mag.co.uk
www.imagine-publishing.co.uk
www.greatdigitalmags.com

Magazine team

Editor Ryan King

ryan.king@imagine-publishing.co.uk
☎ 01202 586 241

Senior Designer Andy Salter

Senior Staff Writers Ian Dransfield, Steve Burns

Sub Editor Olly Dean

Editor In Chief Rick Porter

Head of Publishing Aaron Asadi

Head of Design Ross Andrews

Contributor

Daniel Cairns

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Advertising

Digital or printed media packs are available on request.

Head of Sales Hang Deretz

☎ 01202 586442
hang.deretz@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Account Manager Emma Tyrer

☎ 01202 586430
emma.tyrer@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Advertising Sales Executive Richard Rust

☎ 01202 586436
richard.rust@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Advertising Sales Executive Greg Reed

☎ 01202 586434
greg.reed@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Cover disc

Head of Digital Mat Toor

Digital Projects Co-ordinator Steve Litton

playtrahelp@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Multimedia Editor Matt Deeble

International

Play is available for licensing. Contact the International department to discuss partnership opportunities.

Head of International Licensing Cathy Blackman

☎ +44 (0) 1202 586401
licensing@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Subscriptions

Head of Subscriptions Lucy Nash

subscriptions@imagine-publishing.co.uk

For all Subscription Enquiries

Email play@servicehelpline.co.uk

☎ UK 0844 848 8404

☎ Overseas +44 1795 592 875

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Circulation

Head of Circulation Darren Pearce

☎ 01202 586200

Production

Production Director Jane Hawkins

☎ 01202 586200

Founders

Damian Butt Group Managing Director

Steven Boyd Group Finance & Commercial Director

Mark Kendrick Group Creative Director

Printing & Distribution

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18 Rodborough Road, Frenchs Forest, NSW 2086

☎ + 61 2 9972 8800

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TOP SECRET

CALL OF DUTY

BLACK OPS II

THE SECRET FILES

THINK YOU KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT BLACK OPS II? THINK AGAIN. WE SAT DOWN WITH JOHN RAFACZ, TREYARCH'S DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS, TO GET THE INSIDE STORY ON THE BIGGEST GAME OF THE YEAR. OR IS IT?

TREYARCH'S ROLL CALL



NAME: COD2: BIG RED ONE
FORMAT: GAMECUBE, PS2, XBOX
DATE: 2005



NAME: CALL OF DUTY 3
FORMAT: PS2, PS3, WII,
XBOX, XBOX 360
DATE: 2006



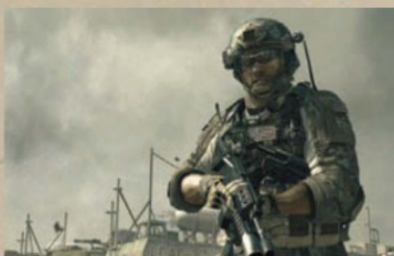
NAME: COD: WORLD AT WAR
FORMAT: PS3, WII, WINDOWS,
XBOX 360
DATE: 2008



NAME: MODERN WARFARE: REFLEX
FORMAT: WII
DATE: 2009



NAME: COD: BLACK OPS
FORMAT: PS3, WII, WINDOWS,
XBOX 360
DATE: 2010



NAME: COD: MODERN WARFARE 3
FORMAT: WII
DATE: 2011



⚡ Set in the future it may be, but it's not totally futuristic.

Every year, around about summer when the sun is out and people start losing their cool, the same questions pop up: is *Call Of Duty* losing its edge? Can it still dominate like it used to?

Usually these questions get batted away with an airy hand, but this year is different. *Halo 4* is launching about 16 seconds before it. Other big-name games are surrounding it in the release calendar, including a much-anticipated *Assassin's Creed* sequel. Who knows? There might even be a new *GTA* game coming out around the same time.

Good job, then, that *Call Of Duty* is changing. Not from its roots, obviously; you'll still be following the man, mostly, and shooting the other mans. But that works. What's new, then, apart from the setting, and why should we be excited?

"There are two sides to the coin," Rafacz tells us. "First is our Strike Force levels, because they are so new to the single-player experience. People are intrigued by them but have questions about how they work."

Ah, yes, the Strike Force mode. Billed as one of the key differentiators between this *COD* and the countless others, it's an evolution, barely. But at least it's something.

If you're unsure as to what Strike Force is – and World War II has also ended, Mr Current Affairs – here's the explanation from Rafacz himself.

"Strike Force levels introduce non-linearity to the experience for the first time. We will all share a common single-player experience. Similar to the single-player experiences before it, you'll play, go through checkpoints, and advance as you would in previous *Call Of Duty* experiences.

"But thrown in the mix, at several points in the campaign, the head of Special Forces will present himself to you, and will talk about these conflicts that are happening in parallel to the single-player campaign – these 'proxy wars'.

"You'll pick one, then be thrown into it sandbox-style, with objectives within. Within that level you will be able to choose any weapon you need, or any point of view you want. You can play straight ahead, *Call Of Duty*-style, boots on the ground with gun in hand. You can assume one of the drones, or quadrotors, and go into Overwatch mode to set waypoints and issue commands – whatever you need to advance the action. But you can also succeed or fail at these levels.

"Those successes and failures are catalogued so that, at the conclusion of your single-player experience, if you have succeeded at all your Strike Force levels, you will have a different geopolitical 'wrapper' around the conclusion of your game."

Geopolitical wrapper? In (nearly) the words of *Peep Show*'s Mark, what does that even mean? Well, it's just a fancy way of saying that your outcome will affect the missions you get in the future. But it's not the only way that you can affect the outcome of the game.

On-the-spot choices in the main game will also have a big hand in who gets to live and who gets to read a solemn message about war being all nasty as the screen fades to grey. Sadly we have no further details on exactly how you'll bring these choices about – saving one member of a squad and not the other, maybe – but that it's there at least says Treyarch is trying to move away from the tired, scripted deaths of yore.

Intriguingly, it appears that your interactions with the villain will help define the ending as well. Raul >

“These inclusions are as new to a series built on linearity as the setting is to one based around modern/historical campaigns”



BLACK OPS: VITA'S (HUNTER) KILLER APP

Announced at E3 2012 to a whooping crowd, *Black Ops Declassified* is just one of a number of big franchises riding to the aid of the PS Vita. Quite frankly, we might be more excited about *Declassified* than we are *Black Ops II*, mainly because, if it's done right, it could be a revolution in the way we play *COD*.

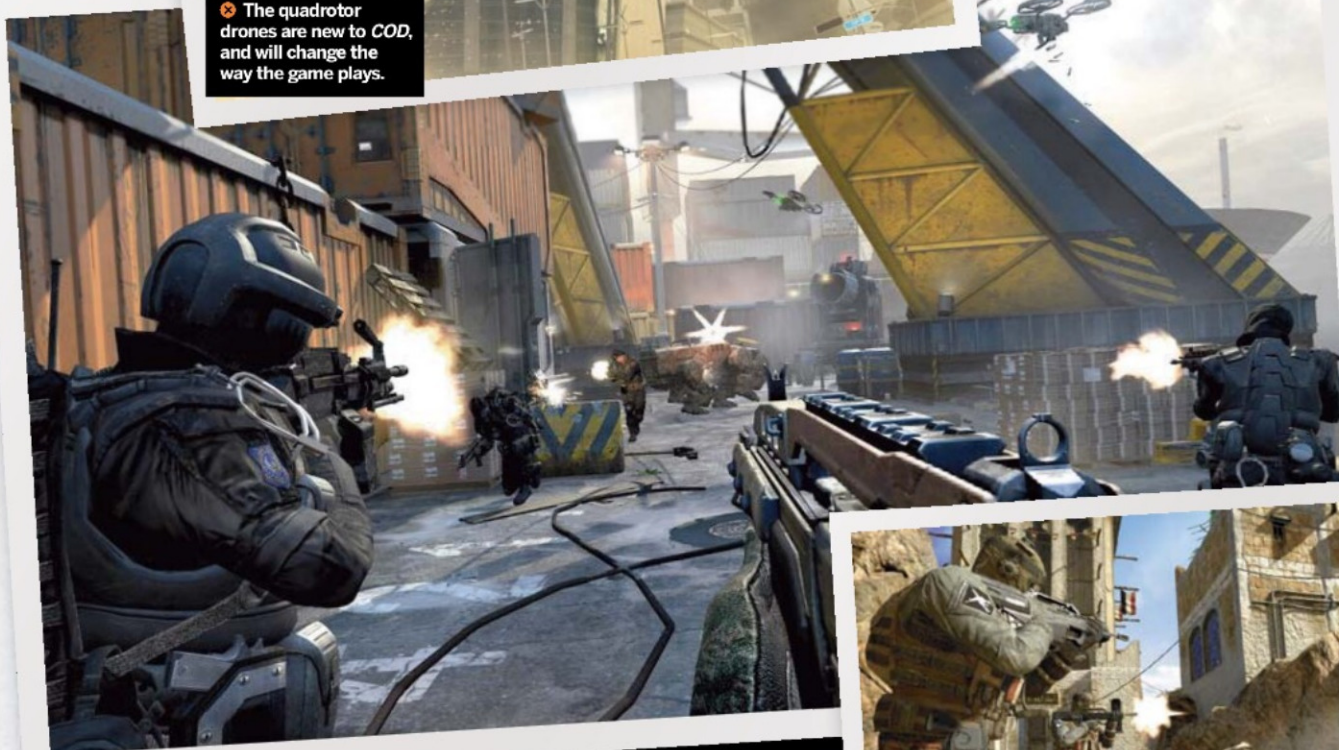
Leaked details suggest that the game is going to be built for mobile play, with bite-sized missions and Spec Ops play on offer. Where *Declassified* could become exceptional, however, is in multiplayer: if this offers a cut-down version of what we already have, Activision and Sony stand to make roughly all the world's money.

It might not happen, but in the absence of any real facts – we don't even know who's making it, and Treyarch won't tell – let's get frenzied with speculation. What if you could play *COD* at home, and then push all of your stats onto your Vita and continue blasting people on the move? Yes, it's problematic. So what? Activision's got more money than Bill Gates and Miley Cyrus combined, and Sony should be falling over itself to help out.

It might seem outlandish, but with Sony's competitors offering second-screen solutions in the Wii U GamePad and Microsoft SmartGlass, and Activision wanting *COD* to become a service, not just a game, it could happen.

✖ The Strike Force missions are *Black Ops II*'s key new single-player feature.

TOP SECRET



✖ War. War never changes.

TOP SECRET

THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF BLACK OPS

> Menendez is described as “collateral damage of the first Cold War”, which probably means that his family/home/priceless Beatles vinyl collection was destroyed by those pesky ‘Mericans/Russians in the section of the game that takes place in the Eighties, which apparently makes up one third of the whole thing. We’re betting that, after meeting him, he’ll turn out to be charming and actually kind of right in what he’s doing, leading to some hard questions.

It’s easy to mock, of course, but these inclusions are as new to a series built on linearity as the setting is to one also based around modern/historical campaigns. The future setting enables Treyarch to explore the murky world of asymmetrical warfare, and the changing loyalties of the Cold War.

All very interesting, but players weaned on explosions, grunting and helicopters that won’t be in the air for more than a second before becoming flaming metal coffins can rest easy. This is still *Call Of Duty*, just a little different.

“[It’s] a logical step forward in the *Call Of Duty* universe, listening to fans to see what they want introduced, and so now there’s this element of non-linearity,” says Rafacz. “We kind of live in this crazy world where, on one hand, people expect the ‘linear’, epic, cinematically intense story experience, but at the same time it’s like, ‘Where’s my non-linear experience?’

“Now, whether that is giving people freedom to play with the [FA-38] and fly around downtown Los Angeles, or on a much broader level that Strike Force levels bring, we’re now looking at catering to a couple of different play styles.”

So it’s the same, but different. Simple, really. But what about the

multiplayer mode? The meat of the game? Sadly, Treyarch is keeping schtum on this front for now, no doubt to eke out more coverage before the big reveal. Evidently, it’s working.

“We haven’t gotten deep into multiplayer, but there are two things shaping the team’s thinking as we approach it,” says Rafacz. “First is the notion of challenging assumption, but we also have to keep the core of *Call Of Duty* – that fast-paced, gun-on-gun, 60fps experience. That doesn’t change.

“What could evolve are some of the elements around that, and taking a look at what makes it fun, as well as the opportunity to grow and expand. The second area is the emergence of the competitive gaming scene, and looking at what e-sports has done to evolve the way we look at watching people play online. Those are two things that factor into our thinking when we talk about multiplayer.”

Frustratingly vague, but Treyarch is far more vocal about improvements it wants to make in the zombie mode.

“It’s a big phenomenon. It began as an unlock in *World At War*, became its own mode in *Black Ops*, and now it’s a lifestyle. In *Black Ops II*, it’s going to be the biggest and most ambitious zombies offering we’ve ever tackled,” states a confident Rafacz.

“It’s being built with the multiplayer engine. If you look at all of the stuff we can do within multiplayer, you can imagine how that’s being applied with the approach to zombies. The team has already talked about 4v4 and maybe other modes that expand on what players expect from that co-op experience.”

Treyarch is confident of offering players enough to tempt them back into the fight. Are we confident, though? What do you think?



TOP SECRET

“Strike Force levels introduce non-linearity to the experience for the first time. We will all share a common single-player experience”
JOHN RAFACZ

THE MAKING OF BLACK OPS

IT WAS THE BIGGEST GAME EVER, AND IT WAS MADE BY A BUNCH OF GUYS WHO HAD ALWAYS LIVED IN THE SHADOW OF THEIR MORE FAMOUS CORPORATE BROTHERS. PLAY SPEAKS TO CONCEPT ARTIST MICHAEL ZIMMERMAN ABOUT HIS ROLE IN HELPING CRAFT THE LOOK OF THE BIGGEST ENTERTAINMENT LAUNCH IN HISTORY, AND HOW THINGS CHANGED AT TREYARCH

How did you come to work on *Call Of Duty: Black Ops*?

I was working at Sony in San Diego on a few projects, including a couple of [US] *Play* magazine covers for *Heavy Rain* and *Ratchet & Clank*, but I lived in Santa Monica, about five minutes from Treyarch. I applied; they made an offer.

When you realised you had the gig, what research did you undertake?

Naturally, I looked at the events pertaining to the Cold War. Primarily I was responsible for environments, so I became familiar with the architecture and landscapes in Russia, Cuba and

Vietnam, among other places. Since a lot of *Black Ops* was based on actual locations, such as the Hanoi Hilton, Duga Station or Hamburger Hill, making sure the environments contained specific elements was key.

What was the biggest challenge presented to you during the project?

For me personally, I think the biggest challenge was matching the historical context. Whenever you work on something historical, it gets the added examination on accuracy since there are so many people with first-hand experience. Trying to make sure everything matched the culture of the

time was a real test. Hopefully it was close enough to support the overall game experience.

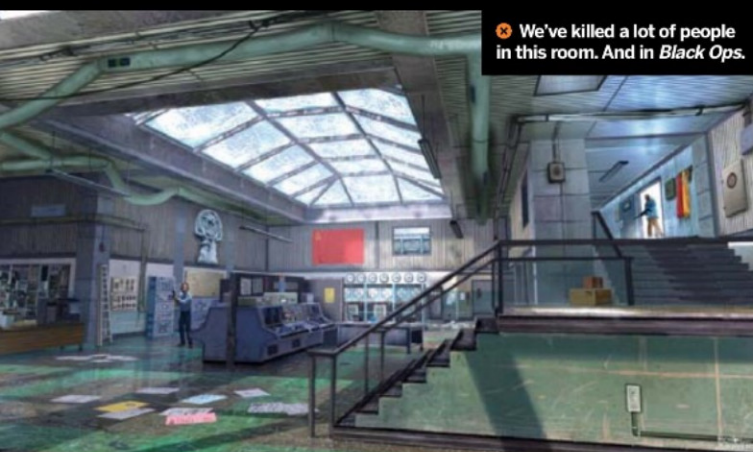
On a related note, did you feel pressurised working on the biggest game of the year?

Not at all. I don't think any of us working on the game had any idea it was going to be as successful as it was. It's one of those things where you don't know how well it's going to go until the work is basically done. Since we were following the success of Infinity Ward's *Modern Warfare*, there were pre-emptive disclaimers from critics that *Black Ops* would fail, because 'it's *Call Of Duty*, but it's not made by Infinity Ward'. I figured the game would still receive attention from players because of the franchise, even if it was only to see if it's a bust.

“The culture at Treyarch has definitely changed a lot over the years since the Vivendi merger”



✖ This is Michael Zimmerman's concept art for what would become Summit. Pretty cool, eh?



✖ We've killed a lot of people in this room. And in *Black Ops*.



✖ If only it was this epic in-game. Still pretty good, mind.

Despite the negativity, I wanted to produce good work to make the most of the opportunity.

How closely did you work with the development team?

As a concept artist, my work helps to guide development. In terms of the creative process for *Black Ops*, we had a team of producers and art directors that would facilitate the art production schedule, and we would have your typical team meetings to go over everything in development.

How many of your contributed ideas were used in the final game?

A lot! It's part of the job. Start with a blank canvas, think of ideas, and draw. Sometimes it's from scratch; other times there are teams of researchers, writers and designers to work with on the plans.

Again, I was primarily responsible for environments, so I would initially paint the overall lighting and colour palettes for levels in the concept art I drew. I would add environmental conditions, architecture and props based on reference images I collected of the Sixties to help tell the story in each of the settings. R&D was a big part of the process. Our design team was backed by veteran United States soldiers, so they were a big help as well in keeping things closer to being historically accurate throughout.

It's a team effort first and foremost, but if I had to name a few specific examples of ideas I'm quietly proud of that made it from my concept art into the game, I'd



TOP SECRET

“There were pre-emptive disclaimers from critics that Black Ops would fail, because ‘it’s Call Of Duty, but it’s not made by Infinity Ward”

say the Russian soldier memorial wall relief on Grid, how the snow tracks in through the floors of the interiors, the half-buried bricks at the bell in Bay of Pigs, and to some degree the wall decay of Clarke’s biochemical lab in Kowloon.

How was it different working with Treyarch as opposed to your experience at other companies?

Well, from my experience, every studio definitely has its own way of doing things. Actually, my first job in the videogame industry altogether was concept artist at Treyarch while I was a student at Otis College, so I have a unique perspective on the company. I used to work closely with both the school and Treyarch, recruiting teachers for classes and classmates for the development team.

The culture at Treyarch has definitely changed a lot over the years since their Vivendi merger. As one could expect, the atmosphere nowadays at Treyarch is a corporate environment with a lot more people and a lot more resources to make games. I worked originally with the company’s founders, who are no longer with the studio, on such hits as *Minority Report*, *Spider-Man 2* and the cancelled *Dead Rush*. We had much smaller teams back then to get things done. Some of my former team-mates

are still with Treyarch and have been there since those days. It was good to work with them again on *Black Ops*.

I suppose working at Treyarch is different from other studios I’ve worked at in that the company has a great amount of resources available to make games. I think the team had more people than any other game I’ve worked on.

Finally, what was the best, funniest or most memorable experience of the development process?

I guess I’d have to say the most memorable experience was the first few days it went to the market and reading the news headlines on the sales, thinking, ‘Oh my gosh, it’s going to break all the records!’ I kept bugging my wife every few days. ‘Honey, it broke the opening day record!’ ‘Honey, it broke the 30-day record!’ I was calling my mom and dad too. It never happened before. As an artist, it’s just a great feeling to see that so many people have an appreciation for something you worked so hard on.

The success of *Call Of Duty: Black Ops* and my artwork being displayed at the Smithsonian this year have been the two proudest moments in my career so far. I’m just grateful to have had the opportunities. ☒

AND FUTURE OF BLACK OPS

BLACK OPS TIMELINE

The world of Call Of Duty can get confusing at times, what with all the shouting, falling over and dying. Here’s a quick recap on what’s gone down so far in Black Ops...

1963

6 OCTOBER Reznov and Mason escape from Vorkuta

10 NOVEMBER Mason and Jason Hudson head to the Pentagon to speak with President Kennedy, who tells them to off baddie General Dragovich.

17 NOVEMBER Woods, Weaver, Mason, Brooks and Bowman storm a Soviet facility to kill Dragovich. They leave thinking they’ve finished the job. They haven’t.

1966

1 AUGUST Dr Clarke makes his plan to escape to South Africa.

1968

21 JANUARY Woods, Bowman and Hudson defend Khe Sanh.

2 FEBRUARY Woods, Mason and Bowman attempt to secure intel in Hue City.

9 FEBRUARY Weaver and Hudson track down Dr Clarke in Kowloon, where he dies before he can tell them the secret of the numbers. At the same time, Mason and Woods assault a Viet Cong outpost, discovering second-in-command baddie Lev Kravchenko’s base.

11 FEBRUARY Mason and co head upriver to retrieve the deadly Nova 6 gas from a downed plane. They’re soon captured by Dragovich.

18 FEBRUARY Hudson and Weaver assault a Soviet base to discover vital intel on Project Nova.

19 FEBRUARY Mason and Woods escape captivity. Bowman is killed, as is Kravchenko when he attempts to kill Woods.

24 FEBRUARY Mason snaps, infiltrates Rebirth Island, and assassinates Dr Steiner. Weaver and Hudson, leading a separate team, realise that Mason has gone mad, thinking Reznov is still alive when in fact he’s part of his own fractured mind.

25 FEBRUARY Hudson finally shuts up as Mason remembers what the stupid numbers mean.

26 FEBRUARY Mason, Hudson and Weaver assault Dragovich’s supervillain installation. Mason kills him, but not before Mason is revealed to have killed JFK.

1978

30 OCTOBER The US and UK team up to assassinate Weaver, Mason and Hudson, who have fled. The outcome of the op is not disclosed.

2025

19 JUNE Woods reflects on the new age of terrorism and another Cold War.

UNKNOWN DATE

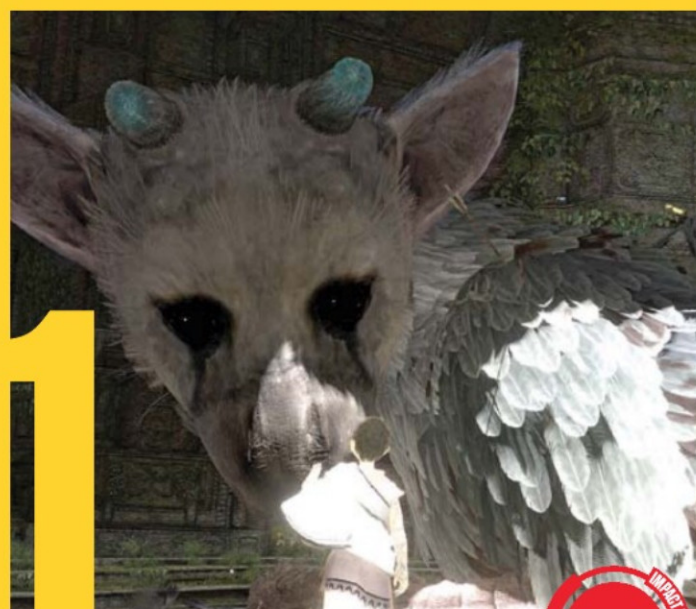
- Reliance on fossil fuels is alleviated thanks to a top-secret mineral.
- US and China steel themselves for another Cold War.
- China adopts drone armies.
- LA hosts a G20 summit.
- An army of drones attacks LA, which has to be evacuated.
- Alex Mason’s son, David, is tasked with protecting the President.

25

EXCLUSIVES THAT WILL DEFINE PLAYSTATION

Between the **PS3**, **PSN** and **PS Vita**, the PlayStation family has got an unbelievably bright future. Here are the games that will bring the best out of Sony's machines and show everyone how cross-platform play should be done

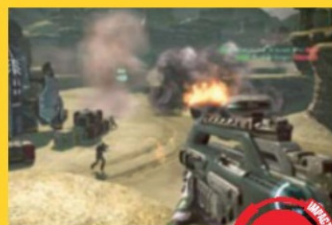
Our patented impact rating tells you how big a deal each game will be, using complicated algorithms that we use to make it up.



THE LAST GUARDIAN

OR SHOULD IT be renamed *The Last Game*? With no release date in sight and the departures of key studio personnel, *The Last Guardian* has become a bit of a whipping boy in the press. It's easy to see why, but when you consider the pedigree working on it then maybe everyone should just give it a break.

It is, after all, made by the geniuses behind *Ico* and *Shadow Of The Colossus*. That should be enough to get anyone excited. As the spiritual successor to those two classics, it should combine both gameplay brilliance with tech that pushes the PlayStation 3 to the limit – Team Ico essentially broke the PS2 with *SOTC*, if you remember. *The Last Guardian* may have slipped into the shadows, but this is still going to be one of PS3's most important games. Don't be surprised if this reappears next year to critical applause.



DUST 514

2 **YES, IT LOOKS** like just another FPS. And yes, you will spend a lot of your time going shooty bang bang. But so what? We love shooting things, and besides, *Dust 514* could be a small revolution in integrating PS3 and PC gameplay.

Dust 514's hook is that your actions are dictated by the overarching war going on in PC-only *Eve Online*. Players of that game can set missions and parameters from their game, and then it's up to their digital PlayStation brethren to go and carry out the mission.

As a freebie supported by microtransactions, which we in all honesty dread, *Dust 514* could point towards a future of asymmetric cross-platform play. That might sound like technobabble, but it's true: an FPS that feeds into a giant interstellar ecosystem? Yes.



NI NO KUNI

3 **IF YOU'RE A** regular reader of *Play* then you'll know that we're big fans of *Ni No Kuni* around here, and the fact that it's not out at the moment is making the office a very sad place indeed. The Namco-published collaboration between Level-5 and Studio Ghibli looks absolutely gorgeous and plays just as well.

A Japanese RPG with all the trimmings, *Ni No Kuni*'s story concerns Oliver, a young boy who has recently lost his mother. Discovering a magic book – stay with us here – he's transported to Ni No Kuni, an alternate reality of his own where he meets different versions of his friends in the 'real' world, and has a chance to find his mother.

Gameplay-wise, this is similar to *Dragon Quest VIII* on PS2, with two companions accompanying you through your journey. Give this a shot.

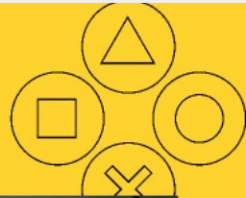


WARRIOR'S LAIR

4 **ANOTHER GAME THAT** is taking advantage of the cross compatibility of the PS3 and Vita, *Warrior's Lair* is a medieval hack-and-slash RPG that enables players to transfer saves between devices and carry on their game on either console.

Which is brilliant, obviously. Even more brilliant is the fact that the game will retail with both versions included, so no buying both if you want to keep playing on the move. It's something that we wish Konami had done with *MGS HD*, as *Peace Walker* already contains the similar 'transferring' ability, letting you move saves between the PS3 version and the Vita. To then not include a Vita version of *Peace Walker* in the package was a bit cheeky, especially as it was left out of the Vita version of *MGS HD* as well.

Moaning aside, *Warrior's Lair* has had an interesting time in development already, with the original developer getting replaced and the game moving in-house at Sony's San Diego studio. Let's hope it works out.



TOKYO JUNGLE

5 **ALREADY RELEASED** IN Japan and already a firm favourite in the **Play** office, *Tokyo Jungle* is one of those games that makes us love and fear Japan more than anything at the same time.

The 'story' is this: at an unidentified point in the future, humans have all buggered off, leaving the animals to fight it out for supremacy. Which is where you come in, picking from a variety of animals – our favourite, of course, is the Pomeranian, if only because it reminds us of Walter from *The Big Lebowski* – and seeing how long you can survive.

As ever with anything interesting, a European release date has yet to be secured. But find an importer and get this in, if only so when your friends come round you're guaranteed to be able to show off a game they don't have.



PERSONA 4: THE GOLDEN

6 **PERSONA IS ONE** of those games that, like *Monster Hunter*, sells like crazy in Japan yet doesn't really make much of an impact on the Western markets. Most of this is, of course, down to its subject matter and gameplay: a Japanese RPG starring high-school students? Where are the guns?

Still, the *Persona* series has constantly dished out some of the best RPG gaming out there. This Vita version is a remake of a PS2 game with added improvements, and has already been released in Japan to prolific sales. There's still no EU release announced yet, although the US is getting it later this year, but fingers crossed this will make the leap sooner rather than later.



BEYOND: TWO SOULS

HEAVY RAIN WAS just the beginning. David Cage may talk a lot of pretentious nonsense and his games sometimes also fall into this trap, but the French director is one of the most interesting guys working in games today. Take *Beyond*: it's got Ellen Page in it, for goodness' sake. She's a real actress and everything.

Casting decisions aside, there's more to *Beyond* than it simply being *Heavy Rain 2.0*. From what we've seen it's far more action-focused than before, with lead character Jodie engaging in gunfights, a train top chase complete with obligatory slow-mo dive from the top of it, and more explosions than a Michael Bay boxset.

Most of this action is facilitated by the other big addition to the game, Jodie's spirit 'friend', Aiden. Able to control or coerce the people around her with Aiden, Jodie is seen causing distractions and even murdering SWAT officers, taking over snipers and firing down onto team-mates.

It's darker than *Heavy Rain*, and obviously far more surreal, in both mechanics and tone. This is Jodie and Aiden's story rather than an ensemble cast, and by reducing the number of playable characters it should enable Cage to tell a tighter story.

From Sony's perspective, it's already a winner. *Heavy Rain* was a big hit, shifting units thanks to excellent gameplay and graphics and, above all, exclusivity. The concept of exclusives has waned in recent years as publishers look to maximise profit, but *Beyond* shows that there's still mileage in the idea. By combining time, effort, money and talent, *Beyond* will be yet another showcase for the PS3, especially from a graphical perspective. Yet another reason for people to buy the PS3 if they haven't already.



LITTLEBIGPLANET KARTING

8 **NO, IT'S NOT** a joke. Even after it was announced, we could barely believe it ourselves, but when you actually think about it, *LittleBigPlanet Karting* makes sense. More sense than *Mario Kart*, at its core. Because *LBP* is about building things, and developer United Front Games already made a good kart-racing game where you build things, so why not combine the two, eh?

As expected, players will be able to customise their own Sackboy, the rules they play by and, of course, the tracks themselves. United Front is promising that this is going to be much more than *ModNation Racers* with the *LBP* logo slapped on, and aside from the extension of the 'Play, Create, Share' ethos, *LittleBigPlanet Karting* also shies away from the usual circuit-based karting shenanigans, with battle and objective-based game modes featuring heavily. With this and *Sleeping Dogs* on the horizon, 2012 looks to be a good year for United Front.



CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS II

9 **IT MIGHT NOT** be exclusive, but there's no doubting the seismic impact that *Black Ops II* is going to have on the world of gaming, let alone PlayStation, especially if, as expected, the PS3 version features exclusive content linking it with the Vita's *Black Ops Declassified*. The last game became the biggest entertainment launch in history and only relinquished the title to *Modern Warfare 3*. Not bad for a game considered by many to be the stopgap while Infinity Ward sorted itself out and got back to business.

The truth, of course, is that Infinity Ward never really sorted itself out, and Treyarch bossed it, creating a better game than its more illustrious sibling. So to see *Black Ops II* mostly abandon the Cold War setting that served it so well and push into the future was surprising: don't people like *Call Of Duty* for its authenticity rather than quadrotors and mechs? Is this the year it all goes sideways? Probably not, as long as it has *that* multiplayer.



10 THE LAST OF US

OR: WHAT THE *Uncharted* guys did next. Naughty Dog already rewrote the rulebook for action-adventure with its bestselling series – just look at the number of imitators it has spawned, gameplay-wise – and now it's looking to do the same for the apocalypse.

It might be from one of the most successful, mainstream developers out there, but *The Last Of Us*'s focus on character is fairly niche. Not a lot of studios would put their faith in an exhausted man and a juvenile girl simply attempting to survive, especially not in this day and age of co-op barn-burners with shooting front and centre. Naughty Dog did, while also adding RPG-style survival elements to the package. Keen eyes will have picked up on Joel's backpack in the recent demos, and what that means for the game: you'll be spending as much time combining scavenged junk into usable items as duking it out with crazed humans or infected former-humans.

End-of-the-world fiction might be the big thing at the moment, but Naughty Dog's take has us very interested indeed. Promising to focus more on survival rather than endless murder, although brutality will be a staple, we're betting the studio that gave us *Uncharted* will also give us a – dare we say it – thoughtful take on the end of the world. With no new adventures for Drake on the horizon, this will be one of PlayStation's most important games of the year. With it already looking pretty strong and the rumbling spectre of co-op play raising its head, **Play** is confident that this could be Naughty Dog's best game yet, and is at least going to send those 360-owning fools into spasms of jealousy.



RESIDENT EVIL VITA

11 REMEMBER WHEN A PSP *Resident Evil* title was announced roughly 300 years ago, and then nothing was heard about it after that? Yeah, us too. A shame, seeing as we were really looking forward to taking what we hoped was an all-new *Resi* on the move in all its glory. Previous handheld attempts for the Game Boy Color ended in disaster, even if the DS version of the original was actually surprisingly good.

It wasn't to be, though. Rumours persist that the *Resi* PSP game eventually morphed, as the games often do over at Capcom, into either another project or something new entirely. We're hopeful that Capcom, having made the well-received *Resident Evil: Revelations* for the 3DS, still has a *Resident Evil* game in mind for a Sony handheld. The market is certainly there, even if it's just a collection of the older games.

COD: BLACK OPS DECLASSIFIED

12 THE BIGGEST VITA game of the year? Done right, it very well could be. We've been banging on about this for a while now, but *Declassified* could be the game Vita needs. With uncertainty abound at both Sony and Activision, which could be sold by its parent company, *Call Of Duty* needs to transition to a subscription-based model quick sharp. Making the game playable across all systems and offering cross-platform play is the next step for the franchise.

Well, that's **Play**'s dream. If this turns out to be little more than a collection of rubbish, bite-sized Spec Ops missions with no multiplayer we're going to be very upset indeed. But we doubt that, because if *Resistance: Burning Skies* can get a full multiplayer mode in there then we're utterly convinced that Activision will port its cash cow properly. Throw in mobile Elite support and you've got the potential for proper *Call Of Duty* on the go.



THE UNFINISHED SWAN

13 AMONG THE MOST interesting games in development, *The Unfinished Swan* may not have the sway of ultra-blockbusters like *Assassin's Creed* and *Call Of Duty*, but it's just as important. As it proved with *Flower* and *Journey*, PlayStation Network is home to games that push the boundaries of gaming, and *The Unfinished Swan* looks to carry on this trend.

Players control a boy called Monroe, and your task is to track down the titular swan following its escape from a painting. Starting with a completely white environment, Monroe uses his paint gun to reveal the scenery. Sound too arty? Forget about it: apparently this is only the opening section of the game. *Swan* could yet go on to be one of the PlayStation 3's finest games. And all without the need for trillion-dollar advertising campaigns or even discs, as it's another downloadable title.



GOD OF WAR: ASCENSION



YES, IT'S A prequel. No, that doesn't matter. We're more than happy to welcome Kratos back to PlayStation – after all, the last three titles took action gaming to the next level, and we've no doubt that this will do the same.

The question is: how? New mechanics and a new setting will obviously feature, since we saw Kratos rewinding time in the most recent demo, rebuilding fallen bridges and helping him solve puzzles. This snazzy new ability can also be used to freeze enemies in place, with all-new combos to make sure Kratos brings the pain when he gets the chance.

The biggest change, though, lies in multiplayer, where up to eight players can team up against each other in combat. Players choose from four factions – Zeus, Hades, Ares and Poseidon, each with their own specialised abilities – and square off for control of various command points to win the game.

When it was first announced as featuring a multiplayer component, *God Of War: Ascension* caused a lot of furrowed brows and spitting of tea. The staunchly single-player series has to evolve, though, keeping it in line with other releases. Viewed from that perspective, *Ascension's* multiplayer mode makes perfect sense, as does bringing back *GOW* in prequel form one last time for the PS3. With a next-generation version no doubt in the works at Sony Santa Monica, this might seem like a stopgap, but it's still going to be massive, guaranteed. If the studio can work the same sort of magic it did with *God Of War II* – releasing it late in the day on PS2 after the studio had learned to harness the hardware's full potential – on *Ascension*, then we're in for a treat.



PLAYSTATION ALL-STARS BATTLE ROYALE

15+16

ONE OF THE worst-kept secrets in videogaming before it was finally revealed, Sony's take on the ultra-successful *Smash Bros* concept is everything we expected:

four-player fighting with some of PlayStation's biggest stars.

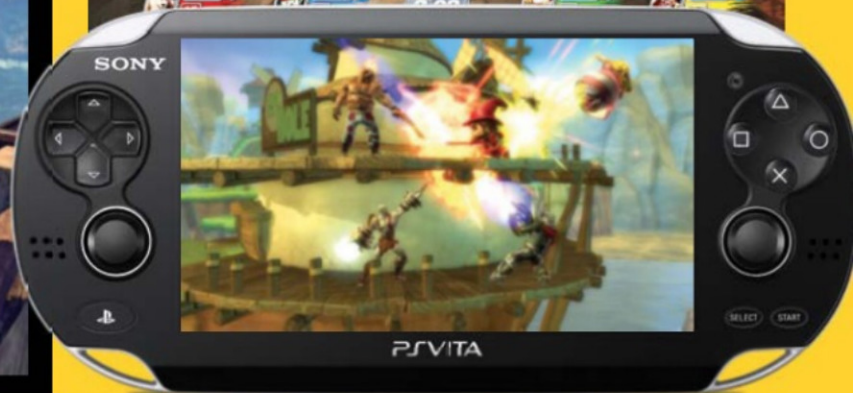
It should appeal to those who dream of pitting Nathan Drake against Kratos, but *All-Stars Battle Royale* didn't have the strongest of starts. When it was demonstrated on screen at E3 – played by producers, not players new to the game – it was enormously difficult to gauge just what was going on.

We know that being frantic is part of the game's appeal, but as it stood it was a little too much so. Fortunately, SuperBot seems to have taken the hint and has hired Seth Killian, formerly of Capcom and the guy who lent his name to the end boss of *Street Fighter IV*. Broken a pad trying to beat his cheating AI? Blame him.

Killian, a former organiser of top-tier fighting game tournaments, will bring his impressive knowledge of the genre and his expertise on balancing the systems that dictate how they should work.

With the gameplay hopefully sorted out, then, let's hope that there will be some crossover between the PS3 versions and Vita equivalent. Even if it's something akin to saving your stats and carrying on via the Vita, we'd welcome the ability. Especially seeing as the old *SmackDown vs Raw* games on PSP enabled you to do all of this, and that was the past, people.

Expect *PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale* to improve dramatically in the next few showings. Between the star power on show and the addition of Killian's expertise to the team, we're far more excited about this than we were even two months ago, which can hardly be a bad thing.





ASSASSIN'S CREED III & ASSASSIN'S CREED III: LIBERATION

17+18 BY NOW THE *Assassin's Creed* series needs no introduction – being one of the world's biggest franchises will do this for your game. *Assassin's Creed III* has been in production for years now, taking more time to produce than the last two games put together, and it's showing: the American Revolution setting is the perfect evolution for the franchise and is certain to appeal to the American audience, and we're confident that Ubisoft has also used the dev time and money to fix the ever more glaring problems of the last two games.

"But *Assassin's Creed* is multiplatform," we hear you cry. "Why is it such a big deal for PlayStation?" Well, sales successes aside, the reason is that the PlayStation versions of the series have historically been the definitive editions, as evidenced by the PS3/PSP crossover in *Bloodlines* and the original game being included in *Revelations*. *Ass Creed III* and its Vita cousin, *Liberation*, take this to new levels.

An all-new adventure only for Sony's handheld, *Liberation* stars Aveline de Grandpre, a female assassin recruited during the Spanish and Indian Wars, in the ongoing fight against the Templars. Using the Vita's touch screen and gyroscope, players will skulk and fight through the bayous of Louisiana in a fully fledged *Assassin's Creed* game that features sophisticated themes (slavery, arranged marriages) and will cross over with *Ass Creed III*'s Connor in the process.

As if that wasn't enough, linking *Liberation* with the PS3 game will see items and other trinkets unlocked in the Vita version, making PS3 the way to go if you want to get everything. Exclusivity might be dying, but that doesn't mean all versions are created equal; the PS3 version is the way to go.



LITTLEBIGPLANET VITA

19 WORRYING IN ITS perpetual absence, the Vita version of *LBP* nonetheless has bags of potential. Come on, people! It's *LittleBigPlanet* but on an amazing handheld. What's not to love? The fact that it's not out yet? Oh, okay.

Developed by Double Eleven, which was formed by two ex-Rockstar employees, *LBP Vita* will have everything the PlayStation 3 version had going for it and more. The days of restricted, cut-down handheld ports are over, and the power of the Vita is enabling the guys at Double Eleven to take everything we loved in the console version and make it playable on the move – or, at least, on the toilet.

We can't wait to take *LBP* on the road, because it's so well suited to incremental play. Tinkering with levels from the sofa is all well and good, but if you want to do something special then *LBP* requires commitment. Why not use the commute every morning to craft that perfect level, like a re-creation of the office you hate?

If that wasn't enough, by far one of the most interesting aspects of *LBP Vita* is the ability to control the PS3 version of *LBP2* via the handheld. The practical applications are astounding: being able to use the gyroscopic sensors and front and rear touch panels for more intuitive design makes us want to dive back into the game.

Apart from promising to be a fine conversion of a classic game, *LBP Vita* with its cross-platform compatibility could well be the nudge that other developers need to see that second-screen gaming and remote control is viable and, most of all, interesting to the masses.



SLY COOPER: THIEVES IN TIME

20 A NEW *SLY Cooper* game is cause for a celebration for those in the know, and given that you've got the good taste to be reading *Play*, we're including you in that group. The *Sly* games have always been absolutely beautiful, even in the bad old days of standard definition PS2, so we're expecting something special here, even if it is developed by Sanzaru, which ported the original games to PS3 in HD. Gameplay revolves around the search for the Thievius Raccoonus, the Cooper family tome that details the family's successes and methods, presumably covering sneaking around and biffing animals that can talk and wear jumpers. So off Sly and his other animal pals go, ducking in and out of time to recover the book.

To be honest, we're not expecting much more than the last few games, but when those happened to be gorgeous, playable platformers, we're in luck. It should definitely be on your radar.



MONSTER HUNTER VITA

21 THERE ARE ONLY two certainties in this life: the first is that you'll die, and the second is that no handheld can compete without a *Monster Hunter* game.

Whereas the PSP might not have been the success it could have been over here and in the States – although don't ever let anyone tell you it wasn't a success, because it was – in Japan it sold like free money due to the fact that it housed the *Monster Hunter* series.

With that in mind, then, a Vita *MH* game makes perfect sense for Sony, especially seeing as its newest baby needs a shot in the arm over there. For those of you who don't know what *Monster Hunter* is, it's a co-op game where you work together to fight monsters. More and more games have been stealing the core mechanics – *Lost Planet 2* and *Dragon's Dogma*, to name but two from the same publisher. When the Vita version lands, it'll be huge.



22



FINAL FANTASY VERSUS XIII

STOP LAUGHING AT the back. Yes, it's been delayed from here to infinity. Yes, it might only just reach stores as the inevitable asteroid hits Earth, destroying it utterly. And yes, we're bored of waiting too.

But make no bones about it: when Square finally gets around to releasing *Final Fantasy Versus XIII*, it's going to be a massive event. Initially billed as the darker instalment of the pretentiously named *Fabula Nova Crystallis* series, it features real-time combat and a world that more closely resembles our own, with geopolitics featuring heavily. With all of the above and gameplay reminiscent of the *Kingdom Hearts* games, we've been excited about *Final Fantasy Versus XIII* for what seems like 200 years. It'll probably take about that much time again for it to come out, but as long as it's amazing, Square can take its time.



FINAL FANTASY X HD

OKAY, SO IT'S not a full remake as was first speculated and which sent *Play* into paroxysms of excitement, but an HD remaster of one of PS2's best games will have to do.

For those of you who missed it first time around – or hate *Final Fantasy*, or live on an island where the only form of entertainment is later issues of *Play* – *FFX* is one of the most debated entries in the series. Praised by some for its excellent graphics and interesting religious angle; pilloried by others for its removal of the freely explorable world map and a non-threatening villain.

These problems won't be remedied for the HD remaster, but for those who came to the series late or have only played *VII*, now's a good time to pick up one of the more divisive entries.



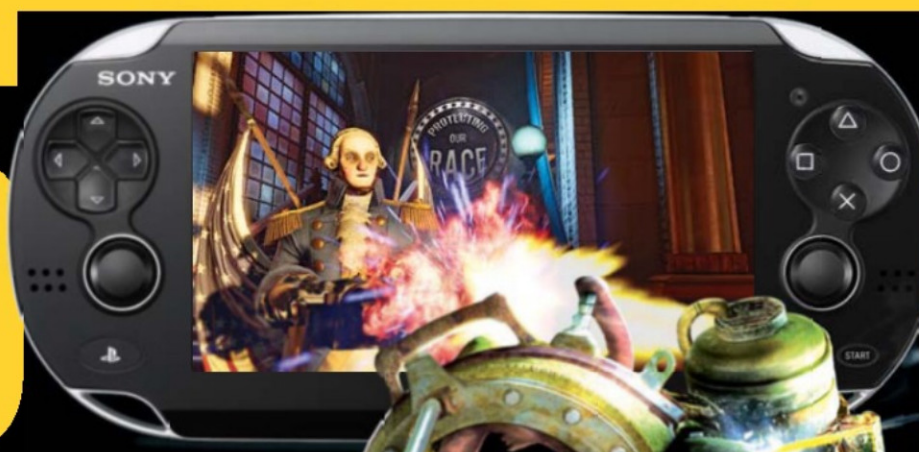
FIFA FOOTBALL 2013 VITA



BY FAR THE best game of the PS Vita launch line-up and one of the few footie games in history to get the name of the sport right, *FIFA Football* still gets played every lunchtime in the *Play* offices. Good job, then, that a sequel is definitely in the works. This is EA; what else did you expect?

There's no word on exactly what improvements will be made on this year's version, but expect the usual bullet point list of features with weird names to make their way onto the box – Total Hairline Control for Rooney, perhaps? One thing we don't want to change is the pace of the game, and how immediately accessible it is; to our minds, *Vita FIFA* was more playable than *FIFA 12* on PS3, unencumbered by ridiculous defending systems and too many animations. Keep that the same, EA, while deepening the other modes and we'll be happy.

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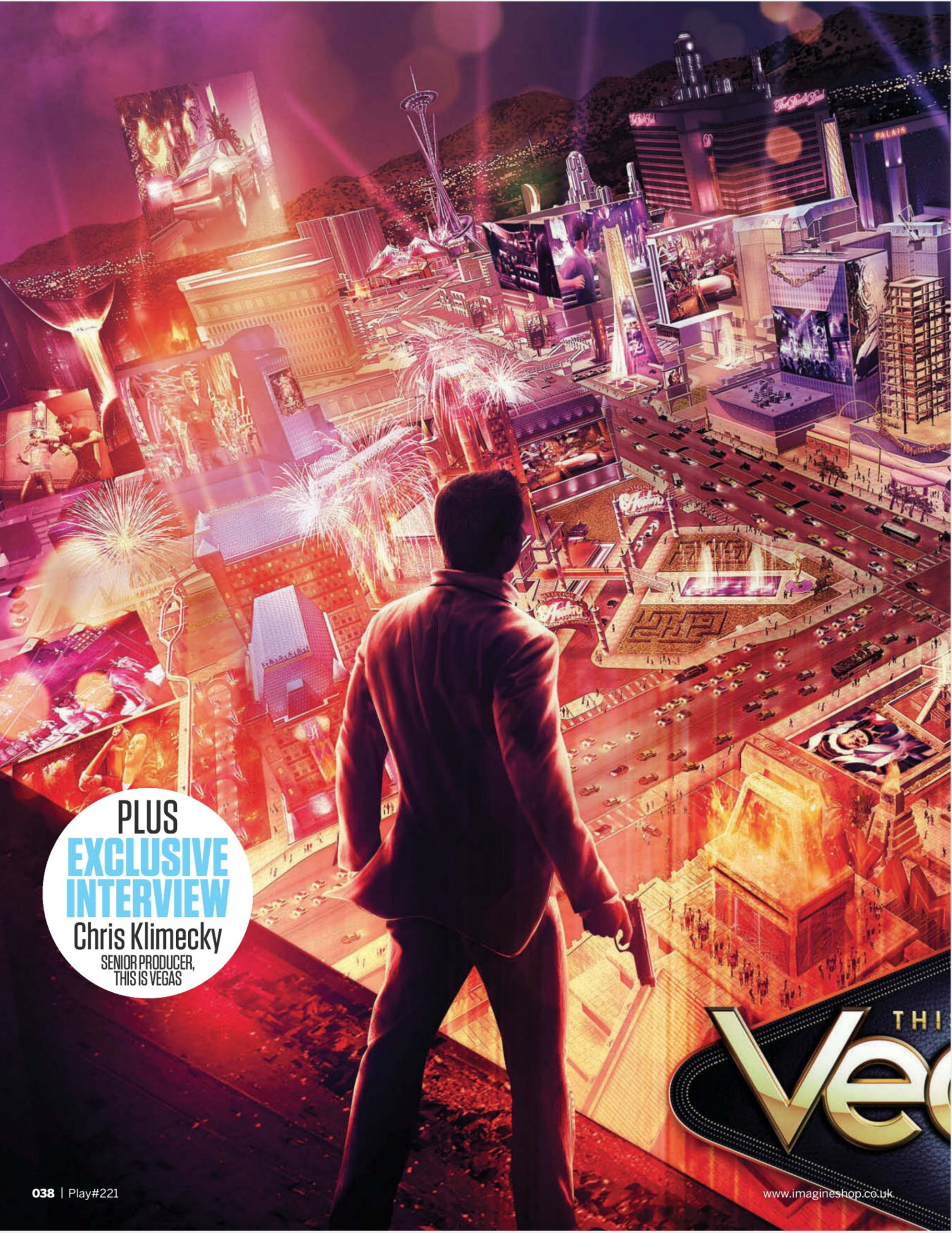
BIOSHOCK VITA

HERE'S WHAT WE know about *BioShock* on Vita: nothing. Whenever we've asked big boss man Ken Levine, the response has been don't ask, and everyone else at Irrational is keeping mum on the subject.

But that's not going to stop *Play* from having a dig around and coming to the conclusion that it's nowhere near ready, it might not tie in to *BioShock Infinite*, and it'll be absolutely brilliant.

Levine himself has admitted that Irrational is at the moment focusing on making *Infinite* the best it can be while also considering its options for making a unique Vita experience. That's good, because although Vita is powerful, we don't just want games ported straight from one console to another. Irrational is one of the most talented studios in the world and has the means and, more importantly, the time to make great games. Expect this to do big things for Vita if Levine and co get it right.





PLUS
**EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEW**

Chris Klimecky

SENIOR PRODUCER,
THIS IS VEGAS

THI
Vegas



THIS IS VEGAS



The Tragedy Of The Original

THIS IS VEGAS KILLER

THIS IS VEGAS HAD IT ALL. GTA-STYLE GAMEPLAY. PORTAL 2'S WRITER. CALL OF DUTY'S PRODUCER. A \$50 MILLION BUDGET. WHAT COULD GO WRONG? AS IT TURNED OUT, ALMOST EVERYTHING, AS WE LIFT THE LID ON THE MOST EXPENSIVE GAME NEVER MADE...

It was to be a make-or-break moment. It was April 2008 and with a backdrop of financial instability looming for Midway, it had two options – go conservative or be aggressive. Midway plumped for the latter. The company hired the Red Rock Casino in Las Vegas and flew the world's gaming press in to see its line-up of games, the last throw of the dice for the embattled publisher. *Mortal Kombat vs DC Universe*, *Wheelman*, *TNA Impact* and *Unreal Tournament 3* were trotted out. Ed Boon was chipper, finally able to show off his first next-gen title, while Mark Rein was merry, slouched on a sofa and waxing lyrical about *Unreal Engine 3* while dropping bottles of beer mid-interview. But none of those games were the centrepiece. That title went to *This Is Vegas*.

Announced to the world for the first time, *This Is Vegas* was the \$50 million nucleus of Midway's comeback plan. The gameplay demo showed the player rocking up to a Las Vegas nightclub and getting the party started by dancing, serving drinks, starting a wet T-shirt contest and beating up rowdy clubbers. This was to be one tiny facet of the game, with the whole of Vegas to explore outside the nightclub's doors. Gambling, vehicle-jacking, personalisation and side missions were all part of the mix. Yet given the antics we were shown,

the first press coverage of *This Is Vegas* looked down on the game, questioning its taste.

"The coverage was much less enjoyable than the event itself, but some of the negativity was not entirely unexpected," recalls Chris Klimecky, senior producer on the title. "We knew we were only showing a tiny snippet rather than really giving people a big-picture feel for what the whole game was. There were a lot of blanks – driving, the world, the story, missions and so on. The people who saw it just couldn't fill in.

Consumers were even more confused, so you got colourful descriptions like 'douchebag simulator'. That kind of thing stings when you know the full story, but it comes with the territory. We knew we had a fantastic game that was woefully underrepresented, maybe even misrepresented, but you go with what you've got for that kind of thing, and with a massive game that had massive tech challenges, that was what qualified as showable. Unfortunate that the coverage of that event is perhaps the most major internet archival representation of the game."

Although no one knew it at the time, this was to be the first and last public showcase of *This Is Vegas* as technical struggles, financial turmoil and company politics sunk their teeth into the project and damned it to development limbo. ➤

"I believe *This Is Vegas* could have stood up to *Grand Theft Auto* and beaten it in a number of respects"

THIS IS VEGAS



> FIRST SIGN OF TROUBLE

The story of *This Is Vegas* began in mid-2004 when new Midway CEO David Zucker bought Surreal Software. "He was on a buying spree of indie developers to try and push Midway out of the arcade age once and for all, along with most of that era's management," Klimecky tells us. Surreal had just shipped *The Suffering* and was working hard on a sequel. The team brought in Noah Heller, who would go on to become the Activision producer overseeing *Call Of Duty*, to manage that project leaving Klimecky free to come up with pitches to Midway for Surreal's next game. One of those pitches, for a game called simply 'Vegas', struck a chord with the right people at Midway. Sadly, this wasn't a sign of good things to come. While Midway's management was high on *This Is Vegas*, it would be one of their decisions that crippled it from the start, as the ambitious title struggled to rise above technical problems.

“She was red-faced, yelling at us to ‘ship the game’ and ‘I don’t care about quality’. Wow, I thought. We’re done”

"This is one of the reasons I gave the detail regarding Midway's involvement in the Vegas origin story, because they were also tied to the Unreal 3 engine decision," explains Klimecky. "Part of Zucker's 'grand plan' regarding acquisition of all these studios was to unite them under a single technology. One engine to rule them all. Unreal certainly wasn't our first choice. One result of this company-mandated decision, strictly on the Unreal side, was that Vegas would be focused on building interiors until a streaming engine could be built. Another Unreal side effect is that we would be focused on Xbox 360, not PS3 for the foreseeable future, but would at some unmentionable point in the future have to accommodate PS3, something we never really got right. Lastly, on the Midway side, it meant that everything from *Mortal Kombat* to *Area 51* to *Wheelman* to *Vegas* to *TNA* had to use the same engine. The development delays and tech challenges created by this were staggering. The time spent on both the tech team and production team side – entire groups at every studio, plus a dedicated engine team in Austin had to be devoted to it – was likely many decades of man-years of effort.

"If it sounds complicated and extremely error-prone, you're right. It was. It was a constant drag on the whole team. Eventually everyone broke away and focused on their own engines, but in many people's minds, that waited far too long – years. I think we always regretted it, but it was also seen as a challenge we would eventually overcome. Nothing here is a knock on Unreal. It simply wasn't built for what we needed, but the situation was complicated tenfold by the Midway sharing approach. There were certainly some benefits, but ultimately it was a mix of decisions and strategies that we would never completely recover from."



● Evidently *This Is Vegas* wasn't all debauched but ultimately good-natured shenanigans.



● The rhythm-action mini-game. Maybe.



THIS IS VEGAS

✦ The players for an insightful treatise on the human condition. No, not really.



✦ An exclusive look at the Play office on the day after deadline.



THE END OF MIDWAY

In isolation, that would be a big enough hurdle to overcome. Yet more ominous were Midway's financial troubles, casting a dark cloud over development. "The Midway exec team was always super supportive of Vegas and I give them a lot of credit for that, specifically Zucker and Matt Booty, even when things got rough and many people internally were telling them otherwise," continues Klimecky. "The Chicago studio teams were notorious for loudly declaring Vegas was a waste of money until they actually saw the newest build. I can't really speak to the financials of Midway, but my impression was while they were bad, they weren't as bad as people thought. They really weren't on the verge of going bankrupt any time soon, although the exec team was constantly manoeuvring the financial situation and there were always questions.

"It is important to remember that the whole fall of Midway was triggered by a bizarre and still-mysterious sale of around \$800 million worth of Midway shares by Viacom overlord Sumner Redstone for \$100,000 to some random investor. Who? Why? What? I think they're still figuring it out in the courts and I'm certainly not an expert

on the details. The creditors ended up buying that guy out for \$14 million or so a couple months later – nice return on that investment, eh? The point is, that sale triggered an accelerated payback of Midway's debts, which was way out of bounds for what was reasonable or what the business could handle – some \$300-400 million, I think – that sent Midway into bankruptcy."

The people at Surreal now found themselves as the musicians who had to keep playing as the Titanic sank, keeping their heads down and working hard even as Midway was being sold around them. "We were full speed ahead, cranking toward our most important do-or-die milestone of the project – it was a ten-month crunch ending February/March 2009. While everyone was frazzled, we were also looking at the game actually coming together, which was super exciting. Once news of the bankruptcy hit coming into the new year, Matt Booty and Alan Patmore did a good job giving the team confidence that we would be sold and the game would be continued. In fact, Alan had done a little personal sales work before the bankruptcy when he could see the writing on the wall. Here we are, trying to finish a critical milestone, and we have potential suitors coming through the doors. It was a bizarre and monstrously stressful time." >



WHAT YOU DIDN'T SEE

GTA-BEATING INTERIORS

"As a result of the team having to work with interiors for so long given the streaming tech difficulties, the interiors were way beyond anything you would usually see in an open-world game. Whether it was go-karting around the top of Axis, clown fighting at The Big Top, running your own mega-casino Eclipse, clubbing at The Mayan or even the independent bars and strip clubs, the variety and fun was wide and deep."

COMEDY FROM PORTAL 2 WRITER

"Comedy was the core of the experience. 'Funny' is, of course, in the eye of the beholder, so there was a lot of risk there, but we had a fantastic writer on board who penned the original script: Jay Pinkerton, of Valve and *Portal 2* fame these days. Comedy of this type is tough to do, and no doubt it was hit and miss with different audiences at different times. It took a long time for us to feel we had it right, which was mostly after what the public ever saw."

PARODIES

"We had hilarious main characters that, for example, were parodies of the Rat Pack – Frankie, Sammy and Dino – and Arnold Schwarzenegger to bit players that tapped Val Kilmer's Iceman from *Top Gun* and a newscast team that often stole the show. Trust me, it was funny. *Entourage* meets *The Hangover* is probably the closest description."

"F***ED BY A BEAR"

"The audible gasps and laughs at the exec review meeting at our first introduction of your sidekick's unwilling participation in the underground porno, *F'd By A Bear*, and then playing as the bear to beat up some pedestrians was a special green light moment."

STUFFED WITH PERSONALITY

"The NPC simulation was incredible. Big crowds of constantly unique individuals with personalities weighted to the part of town, time of day, or casino you were in. You could literally people watch and listen and be entertained for long stretches of time. You could drive around and find fun and unique personality in every corner of the world."



> WARNER BROS SALE AND 'THE MEETING'

When Midway finally succumbed to its financial wounds in February 2009, all eyes were on what would happen with its major studios. Midway San Diego was sold to THQ. Midway Newcastle was shut down. Midway Chicago became NetherRealm Studios after it was sold to Warner Bros, which is also where Surreal Software ended up. This was a crucial period for *This Is Vegas* but, unfortunately, the honeymoon period didn't last.

"It all seemed well and good at the beginning," recalls Klimecky. "I think there were some people fairly high up in the ranks that actually liked *This Is Vegas* and wanted to see it through. It definitely wasn't the first meeting that was the problem. Things went downhill fast after the acquisition. They started inserting management personnel to 'help'. The game took an expected-to-us-but-surprising-to-them dip in progress after alpha, as the tech team tore the engine apart once again to optimise it. They panicked. We heard more and more about legal concerns regarding our parody characters from the corporate legal team and Warner Bros' stance to only ship products with their known IP."

The worst was yet to come. "I'll never forget the meeting when I knew it was time to throw in the towel. It was my first time in a conference room with Samantha Ryan [Warner Bros senior VP of product and development]. I was excited going in, because Alan was

“ There was plenty of finger-pointing about how and why it all went wrong. We're not all good friends any more ”

usually the only one having high-level meetings with Warner Bros. This time, it was the entire Surreal directors group and a number of Warner Bros folks. Boy, was I wrong in thinking this was a good thing. Many of the details are fuzzy but I remember Samantha clearly – she was livid. At some point she was red-faced, yelling at us to 'ship the game' and 'I don't care about quality' and doing a physical comparison of priorities with her hands reaching down to the ground. 'Quality is under the floor!' Wow, I thought. We're done. Her directive was so antithetical to our entire team and project; there was no way it was going to work. Even at the lowest quality we could string together at that point, it would take us another six to eight months to be shippable at all. Easily another 12 months to get to where we would feel good about it. I had initially thought they were getting a deal, a \$50 million game for \$12-15 million. Obviously they had a different perspective. Whether they tried to make something else out of it or not, it was done as the project we all cared about, and I was certainly done."

STUDIO TORN APART, GAME KILLED

The writing was on the wall following that showdown as Warner Bros started peeling Surreal apart, as Klimecky remembers. "I transferred over to Snowblind to help with *Lord Of The Rings: War In The North*, which was a positive experience for me while it lasted. Alan was forced out and moved to California. I heard Surreal attempted a mini-game compilation of Vegas parts as a possible release, and at another point were working to connect it to *The Hangover II* somehow, but as far as I know that all fizzled by early 2010. Those that weren't laid off in 2010 were absorbed into Monolith and Snowblind. Our beautiful studio was mostly empty and the game went into oblivion as far as I know. The cinematics team tried to create finished versions of all the storyline cinematics, but I don't know if that personal project ever came to fruition.

"It was definitely a bittersweet end and there was plenty of finger-pointing about how and why it all went wrong. We're not all good friends any more, which is a shame, but certainly some very strong bonds remain. During so many years we were family. Dysfunctional family sometimes, but family nonetheless, and it was a close studio that held together through lots of good and tough times. That last year was brutal, and when we were in it, you couldn't get the perspective on a situation like that to really understand what's going on and where it's headed – years of frustration and burnout took their toll. It was a wild ride that everyone experienced in their own way."

And that was the end of *This Is Vegas*. *Saints Row* has capitalised the most on its absence, filling in the GTA-with-OTT-humour void to the tune of millions of sales and rave reviews. There's no guarantee that *This Is Vegas* would have met with the same success, but we'll never know.



They have gambling in Las Vegas now.

"I think those who would have loved it would have really loved it," says Klimecky. "Of course, some would have panned it, but the humour wasn't for everyone. I think it would have been tremendously successful. I believe it could have stood up to *GTA* and beaten it in a number of respects, though likely not in sales. It was still an untested, new IP – there's more to sales than just the quality of the game, of course. I like to imagine we would have had a chorus of vocal fans who truly 'got it' and understood the gem of uniqueness that it was to push past the inevitable naysayers, to tell the stories and show their friends those 'Vegas moments' they had and how much fun they were having in this amazing world. Screenshots and a few anecdotes just don't do it justice. Though it was entertaining right from the first moment, you had to really put in the hours to fully appreciate the Vegas experience we had built. There was a lot of love and hundreds of man-years of effort put into that project – it would have been really cool to see on shelves." ❌

Graphically, Vegas looks more than a match for GTA. Too bad it didn't make it.



WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

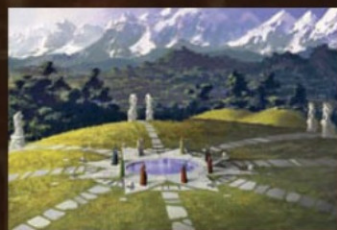
This Is Vegas isn't the only game to suffer troubled development



» EIGHT DAYS

STATUS: 'ON HOLD'

First shown off during Sony's E3 press conference in 2005 and from the studio that brought us the *Getaway* series, the project seems to have yo-yoed to a standstill in the years following. It was officially announced in 2006. Then, in June 2008, it was cancelled, as "resources were reallocated to projects closer to completion". In October 2009, the official stance was it was 'on hold'. Since then... nothing.



» THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE WHITE COUNCIL

STATUS: CANCELLED

In July 2006, EA announced that it would develop *The Lord Of The Rings: The White Council*, a game based on both Tolkien's books and the film trilogy. Less than a year later that dream was over, as the game was cancelled in February 2007. No official reason was ever given, but murmurs of 'management problems' soon followed in the wake of the cancellation.



» DEVIL'S THIRD

STATUS: NO PUBLISHER

After Tomonobu Itagaki left Tecmo in 2008, he formed Valhalla Game Studios the following year and started work on *Devil's Third* for THQ. The company making the original engine for the game went out of business, forcing the developers to start again on another engine, but worse still, THQ decided the project wasn't likely to be profitable enough and is now looking to shift it to a new publisher.



» FINAL FANTASY XIV

STATUS: BEING REDEVELOPED

The plan was for *Final Fantasy XIV* to release on PC in September 2010, with the PlayStation 3 version due in March the following year. Yet the PC release proved so disastrous that Square Enix cancelled its plans and decided to batter both versions into a state worthy of the *Final Fantasy* name. The relaunch and PlayStation 3 version are now due in early 2013.



» THE DARK KNIGHT

STATUS: NEVER ANNOUNCED

Pandemic had been rumoured to be working on a game to tie in with *The Dark Knight*, with actor Gary Oldman accidentally confirming it in an interview when he spoke of how a lot of effort had gone into getting Batman's gliding abilities right. However, something changed along the way – no announcements were made, the film came and went, Pandemic ended up being closed down.



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BLACK OPS II

THE SECRET FILES

THINK YOU KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT BLACK OPS II? THINK AGAIN. WE SAT DOWN WITH JOHN RAFACZ, TREYARCH'S DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS, TO GET THE INSIDE STORY ON THE BIGGEST GAME OF THE YEAR. OR IS IT?

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ing game genre are surrounding it in the release calendar, including a much-anticipated Assassin's Creed sequel. Who knows? There might even be a new GTA game coming out around the same time.

Good job, then, that Call Of Duty is changing. Not from its roots, obviously; you'll still be following the man, mostly, and shooting the other mans. But that works. What's new, then, apart from the setting, and why should we be excited?

"There are two sides to the coin," Rafacz tells us. "First is our Strike Force levels, because they are so new to the single-player experience. People are intrigued by them but have questions about how they work."

Ah, yes, the Strike Force mode. Billed as one of the key differentiators between this COD and the countless others, it's an evolution, barely. But at least it's something.

If you're unsure as to what Strike Force is - and World War II has also ended, Mr Current Affairs - here's the explanation from Rafacz himself.

...and will talk about...
...the first time. We will all...
...the same questions pop up...
...Similar to the single-player...
...You'll pick one, then be...
...into it sandbox-style, with...
...within. Within that level you...
...be able to choose any weapo...
...need, or any point of view...
...You can play straight ahead...
...Of Duty-style, boots on the...
...with gun in hand. You can...
...one of the drones, or quan...
...and go into Overwatch mo...
...waypoints and issue com...
...whatever you need to advan...
...action. But you can also su...
...fail at these levels.

“These in...
...a series...
...setting is to...
...modern/histo...



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...the outcome of your single-player experience, if you have succeeded at all your Strike Force levels, you will have a different

On-the-spot choices in the main game will also have a big hand in who gets to live and who gets to read a solemn message about war being all nasty as the screen fades to grey. Sadly we have no further details on exactly how you'll bring these choices about - saving one member of a squad and not the other, maybe - but that it's there at least says Treyarch is trying to move away from the tired, scripted deaths of yore.

Intriguingly, it appears that your interactions with the villain will help define the ending as well. Rauli

conclusions are as new to built on linearity as the one by historical



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PREVIEWS

The games that will shape the future of PlayStation



RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER

Tekken Tag Tournament 2

Namco Bandai's fighter gets Tekken out on a tag do

PS3 It's the look. Or rather, it's *that* look. The look of someone faced with a character select screen dotted with more scowling faces than a local mugshot gallery, eyes squinting to find out where the hell they've put Bryan/Jin/Heihachi/delete as appropriate. Not Kuma. You players are lucky. Just look for the spot of brown fuzz on the screen. Everyone else? You're stuck with that look, trying to figure out where your character is hidden.

This is a long way of saying *Tekken Tag Tournament 2* is enormous. It's the kind of game we'd describe as bursting at the seams, had it been stitched together by a keen seamstress rather than developed by a small army. And as another month has passed, hey, have more characters! Alex is the lizard with boxing gloves in the same mould as Roger Jr, and while we're assured that veterans will find his moves familiar, he'll have many distinct attacks of his own. Forest Law will be brought back, so he can team up with his father, Marshall Law, who was previously confirmed. Prototype Jack is back after *Tekken Tag Tournament* while Tiger Jackson, originally a palette swap for Eddy Gordo,

now has his own moves alongside his afro, funk trousers and hideous shirt.

They join the existing cast, which has been rebalanced – Lars has been toned down, Zafina has been buffed up – while new faces join in. Jaycee is Julia Chang from *Tekken 6*, albeit in a luchador wrestling getup with moves to match – her trademark elbows are now complemented by drop-kicks, back spins and sunset flips. Kunimitsu returns after a long absence from the series, now packing ninja stances and quick blade attacks. Even bosses are on your side – Angel from *Tekken 2*, Ogre from *Tekken 3* and Jinpachi from *Tekken 5*. The latter, in particular, is interesting. The chance to play as one of the most annoying videogame bosses ever created? Go on, then.

"The tagging system adds a new dynamic!" the press release will probably say when this hits HMV shelves next

month, which translated into English means 'tagging is good fun'. That's it, really. Tagging characters in and out of battle means the on-screen player gets stuck into the fight while the off-screen partner recovers health. It's a quick tag that happens fast enough that you need to have swift reactions to spring into action and hit the partner running into battle before they can block. It doesn't carry the risk that a raw tag in *Ultimate Marvel vs Capcom 3* does, where you get hit by arrows, lasers, meteors and colourful, fiery death just because you pressed tag at the wrong time. It's a lot safer and easier for beginners to use.

What's complicated is using tagging to build up increasingly elaborate combos, spinning your opponent through the air as your partner rushes in to add more hits, before control is handed back to your original character. This is where experimentation with the tag system will

lie, as you figure out different character combinations, setups and combos.

Which seamlessly brings us to Fight Lab! This will teach you how to play *Tekken* without doing it in a boring 'attack your opponent... well done!' manner that fails to entertain anyone with a gaming IQ in double digits. Instead, Fight Lab will present all manner of mini-games and challenges to hook your interest, while you can also modify Combot with moves from other characters to create your own custom combos. *Tekken Tag Tournament 2* is the sort of well-rounded package you get from a studio that understands its strengths, its player base and what people want. If only it could make the icons on the character select screen that little bit bigger... >

Namco Bandai will cook up the latest recipe for *Tekken*-flavoured beatdowns. Check its progress at the suitably named namcobandai.com

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Roughly 800,000 characters.
- Lots of returning characters like Kunimitsu and Prototype Jack.
- Fight Lab for beginners and experts.
- Online play is a huge focus for Namco Bandai.

READ ME

In this sequel to *Tekken Tag Tournament*, one of the first PlayStation 2 titles, Namco Bandai is bringing together almost every *Tekken* character. Except Gon. And Dr Boskonovitch.



Two-on-one combos would be the name of the game, if the name of the game wasn't *Tekken Tag Tournament 2*.



The characters here span generations of the *Tekken* roster.



King's new invisible baseball bat attack was a killer.



ONLINE GAMING – THE NEW FOCUS?

Katsuhiro Harada promises to fix up the online multiplayer

TEKKEN 6 HAD decent online multiplayer. However, is decent enough? Probably not, as all bar the hardcore soon abandoned online for other games. The ranking system wasn't great and the netcode was good but fell apart when playing someone from other shores. Online play is the main thing Namco Bandai has focused on following the console release of *Tekken 6*, acknowledging its importance and also that the last game didn't quite get the job done. Fingers crossed for the netcode in *Tekken Tag Tournament 2*, then, as it's looking like the only potential weak link in the chain.

I HAVE A CERTAIN GROUP OF FANS WHO SAY THE SAME THING OVER AND OVER AND OVER AGAIN



KATSUHIRO HARADA
Game director, Tekken

We surprise Katsuhiro Harada with our game knowledge. He surprises us with sexy Xiaoyu poses. It's a cultural exchange in Q&A form!

Following the console release of Tekken 6, what was the main thing you were looking to improve for the console version of Tekken Tag Tournament 2?

The one everyone's thinking of is online play, and for Tekken it's quite difficult because out of all the fighting games, and even other games, Tekken is the quickest between the button input and when it's displayed on screen. So taking that and having the same experience online is quite difficult and something we focused on for Tag 2.

Not only that, but Tekken 6 sold almost 4 million copies worldwide, so there's a lot

of people there who haven't played Tekken before. We did have practice mode, but practice mode isn't something that people will pick up and play themselves; it's more for advanced players and such. The people we wanted to play the most didn't pick it up. So we wanted to create something especially for them to enjoy the game, but while they're doing so, they pick up the basic mechanics of Tekken. So that's where Fight Lab came in.

have Kazuya and Heihachi, they have a bad relationship, so you normally don't see rage occurring that much because of that.

On another level, there are also the gameplay mechanics, what kind of moves they have available for launchers and connecting wall combos and how they pair together. There are also combinations that are more beginner-friendly as well. So we had to go through and rebalance the whole game, to make it more geared towards the tag gameplay.

We had to go through and rebalance the whole game, to make it more geared towards the tag gameplay

With all the characters needing to be balanced and then having to make the endings for each of them and so on, do you feel as though there are

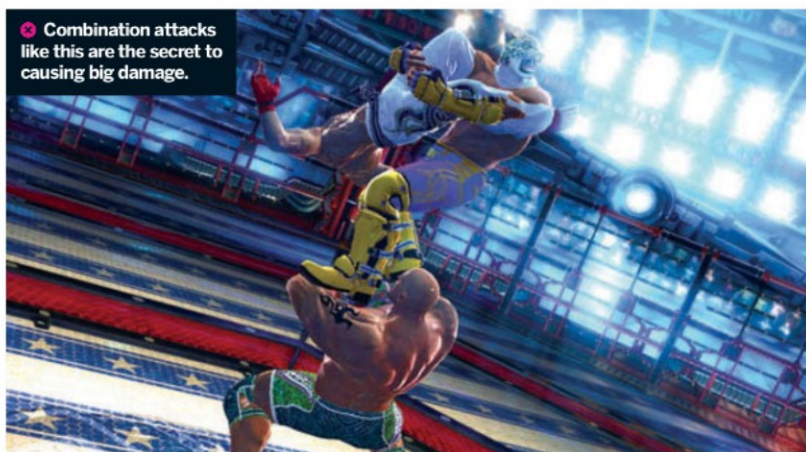
too many characters?

Every day the staff tells me there are too many characters and stuff to complete! I was thinking we could go up to 60 or so, but I'm thinking recently we should decrease it to half. [laughs]

Are Tekken fans nowadays harder to please than they used to be?

Back in the day for Tekken 1, 2 and even 3, I think the player base was more casual then for fighting games. Especially 3D ones. Now, on the current hardware, we're in the second or even third generation of players because back in the day, the people in their 20s who were playing those games are close to 40 now.

In this generation, they're choosing to play fighting games. It's not the cool thing so far, as it was back then. Obviously, because they choose that category, they seem to have a lot of preferences with what they expect from the game. And even the people who have been playing since 1, 2 and 3, they've been playing so long that they have their own deep and perplexing preferences. So



Combination attacks like this are the secret to causing big damage.



Fight Lab is an overhaul of the usual practice mode, designed to be useful to beginners and experts alike.

As players worked out Tekken 6, Bob, Lars and Law emerged as top-tier characters while Zafina was bottom-tier. Was that something you anticipated happening? How will characters be rebalanced for Tekken Tag Tournament 2?

I'm quite surprised. You seem to know a lot about the game. We don't get that question often. Maybe once or twice. [laughs] The characters you mentioned are characters that are considered strong in Tekken 6. More so maybe for mid-level players than advanced because the really top-level players have a different perspective on that. But obviously when we were creating Tag 2, we did view some of those criticisms and try to address them.

But we had to rebalance anyway because, with Tag Tournament, you have different levels of balance within your team. On one level, there's the story, where the two characters might hate each other or might be more friendly, and that actually affects the game dynamics – the more your partner takes damage, the more you get enraged if you have a good relationship. Whereas if you



Now that's just cheating...

pleasing these people recently does seem to be more difficult than it used to be.

How many tweets do you get a day?

If I'm just laying low and being quiet on Twitter, maybe 120 or so a day. If I'm answering questions – I don't usually write a whole lot myself; it's pretty much answering questions from fans – then it's beyond being able to count. Sometimes I stay up five or so hours in the middle of the night answering questions. So it varies.

Who has the crazier Twitter fan base: you or *Street Fighter* producer Yoshinori Ono?

It's hard to say. Both fan bases are kind of similar. If you had to distinguish, both fan bases are crazy in some respects. Ono-san has a group of people who are quite vulgar in their comments to him, while I have a certain group who say the same thing over and over and over again. [laughs] So both are crazy in their unique way. It's hard to say.

Where's *Tekken X Street Fighter*?

The look of the game is coming along. The game system itself, though, we're still prototyping a lot of things.

We only found out through your tweets that you did the voice for Forest Law in *Tekken 3*. Is there any other similar fact about your role in *Tekken* that you can surprise us with?

I also did some of the voice for Yoshimitsu. And some other stuff as well, like the sound composer Denji Sano, who did the music for *Ridge Racer* and *Tekken* back in the day; he did some of the sound for Yoshimitsu. This might make you disgusted, but back in the day – the data has been swapped out by now – Michelle had the pose where she would pray or Xiaoyu did some kind of cute pose. That was me doing the pose! [laughs]

Put it in *Tag 2* as DLC.

[laughs] I doubt that would sell!

You'd think Jun would be experienced enough by now to know which way to look.





RELEASE DATE: 2 OCTOBER

Resident Evil 6

Horrifying, in both a good and bad way

PS3

What's that about pleasing all the people all the time? From the outset, Capcom's ambitious, multi-campaign horror/action sequel has seemed like both an apology for the divisive *Resident Evil 5* and an attempt to harmonise the series' fans. Saying you'll do that is fine, however; actually doing it is tricky, as we found out in our hands-on. It's not there yet, and that's putting it mildly.

So far, only Leon's campaign really stands up. The other two are fractured and uninspired, and probably not helped by the fact that our demo jumped into the action what appears to be a substantial way into the game.

It's not a great sign with less than three months left until release, but we've been here before with Capcom. This is, after all, the company that released quite possibly the worst demo of all time for *Resi 5*. Let's hope that, like that game, the full release of *Resident Evil 6* is immeasurably better than its preview.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Leon's story looks great.
- Jake is appropriately mouthy, given his parentage.
- Chris's arms are back to normal size.
- But will that be enough?

READ ME

After dividing fans with *Resident Evil 5*, Capcom has taken a scattershot approach to the sequel, aiming to ensure everyone's happy with three distinct campaigns and gameplay styles.

1

THE HORROR, THE HORROR

Of the three experiences in the demo, Leon's is by far the best. Melding classic *Resident Evil* tropes like creeping around grand old buildings where people seem allergic to light, trying to open locked doors, with *Resi 4* and *5*'s shooting, it's a pleasing mix of both old and new.

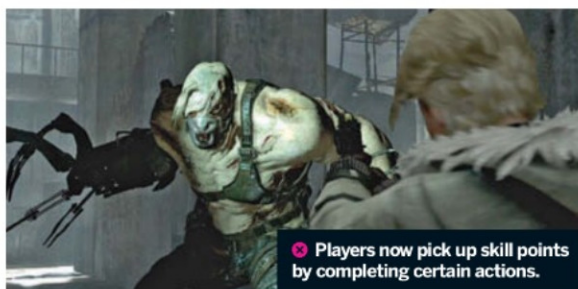
Opening with Leon putting a bullet in the zombified US President and throwing Ingrid Hunnigan and the rest of his off-site mission support into panic – apparently shooting the prez is a bit of a big deal, alive or not – the secret agent and his partner, Helena Harper, soon run into a panicked survivor intent on rescuing his daughter from the damned Tall Oaks university campus. Cue lots of slow walking, lights flickering, and bumps in the night as the trio – illuminated for a while by torchlight only – check every nook and cranny of the grand old building.

Inevitably, things kick up a gear when Leon and co find the girl, who, along with her dad, might as well be wearing a sign saying 'Marked'. Soon zombies are flooding the underground parking lot that the team are using as an escape route. The switch from survival horror to panicky action is an impressive one, as with a paucity of ammo, Leon and Helena have to run for it.

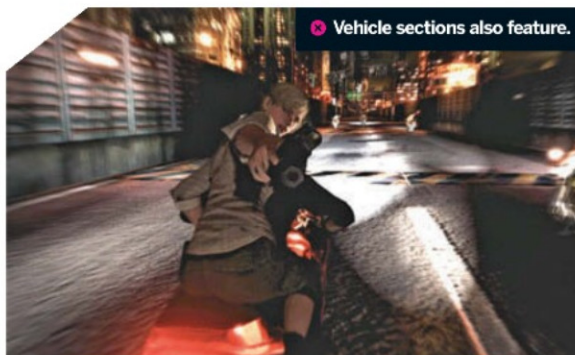
In terms of looks alone, from what we've seen Leon's campaign is also the most visually impressive. As ever in *Resident Evil*, the production values are insane, but the lighting model really seems to suit the old-school survival horror style. As does the gameplay, if we're honest. Leon's tale certainly impressed us more than its stablemates.

MUTATION STATION

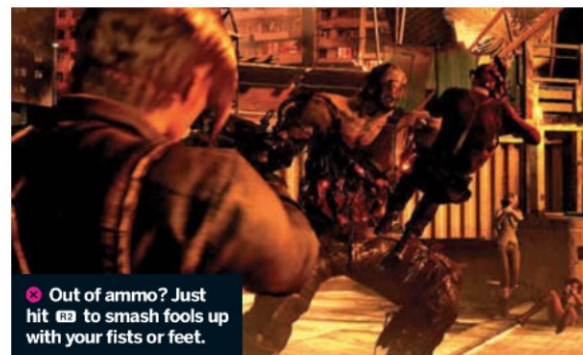
What else is new in *Resi 6*?



Players now pick up skill points by completing certain actions.



Vehicle sections also feature.



Out of ammo? Just hit [X] to smash fools up with your fists or feet.



MAN DOWN

Almost the exact opposite of Leon's section, Chris's is, frankly, poor. Capcom has naturally taken inspiration from *RE5* for this one – along with *Max Payne*, if the drunk, washed-up and boo-hooing Chris from the opening cut-scene is anything to go by – but it's just not satisfying. During an all-out assault on a Chinese rooftop populated by a squadron of infected soldiers and mercenaries, old problems remain: the camera isn't dynamic enough to keep up with your actions, the controls are clunky, and, very simply, high-octane shooting just doesn't suit the game that well.

Worse still, the aforementioned flaws clash nastily with the level design. As part of the assault on the stronghold, Chris spends most of his time vaulting across rooftops and climbing so many ladders that it's no surprise he's so buff. Sadly, this design is a disorienting, bland mess, and although the environment is wonderfully modelled, it's simply not engaging to explore.

At its highest point, what we saw was a barely serviceable shooter. At its lowest it was laughable, with Chris traversing two buildings via a connecting pipe being particularly poor. Moving hand over hand across it at a pace approaching glacial, a horde of enemies brandishing assault rifles appeared on a balcony below. Not ten yards away, almost every one missed their shots as Chris moved... so... slowly across the divide. It just didn't make any sense.

We're hoping that, out of context, this is a blip, and that in the full game things will improve. As it stands, however, it's not very good.



NEW KID IN TOWN

As the newcomer, Jake's slice of the story probably has the least amount of pressure attached to it. Imagine the uproar that is about to befall Capcom HQ, then, when fans find out that, at least in the sections demonstrated to us, Jake's gameplay is far more enjoyable than Chris's.

Not so much tipping its hat to the *Uncharted* series as hugging it tightly and tearfully expressing its love, Jake's section features plenty of running into the screen and contextual jumping between collapsing platforms. This is due to a persistent foe chasing Jake down in the Ustanak, not unlike *Resident Evil 3*'s Nemesis.

It's fine when *Resi 6* is pretending to be *Uncharted*, but when plonked into more traditional

shooting the action becomes a bit predictable.

The Ustanak is borderline unstoppable, with only explosives really doing any damage to him. We saw players plonked into a bland room, noteworthy only for the red barrels dotted around the place.

It's all very gamey, which is obviously fine, but it's not very inventive and is pretty tired, if truth be told. As ever, you've got to lure the Ustanak to the barrels before shooting them. Do this enough and he'll collapse, enabling you to proceed to the next area.

Again, we're hoping that Capcom simply made a poor choice with its demo levels. It's not as bad as the steroid-addled BSAA member's take on the canon, but compared to the Leon section and competing franchises, it's not really cutting it.



✖ Grenades and weapons can now be selected via the D-pad.



✖ The HUD is dynamic, only showing when you need it.



PREVIEW



RELEASE DATE: 17 AUGUST

Sleeping Dogs

Square's new open-world (under) cover shooter

PS3

Receiving preview code of open-world games is a practice that makes us immediately suspicious. Maybe it's the years of having to go up to Rockstar's palatial lair to play its latest blockbuster while a PR hawk sits behind you, gun in hand, but it just doesn't happen very often. The potential for game-breaking bugs is too great. Something must be up.

So when *Sleeping Dogs* came in, we got *The Fear*. Was it a trick? Would the disc corrupt our hard drives? Would the 'game' actually be a picture of Square Enix's PR team telling us to do one?

No, as it turns out. (They usually do that over the phone, anyway.) What was actually there was a substantial portion of a game that you might very well be playing right now, and we enjoyed what we saw.

It might not be called *True Crime* any more – it was resurrected by Square after the big bad wolves at Activision remembered that it didn't have the words 'Call Of Duty' in the title and had it taken out back and shot – but it feels exactly like a current-gen update of one of PS2's promising but underwhelming open-worlders. Conflicting allegiances between cops and crooks, slow-motion shooting when in vehicles, martial-arts-based combat... Stop

us if you're getting bad nostalgia pangs for 2003.

The main difference is that, even at this stage, it's much better than the previous games. Developer United Front's take on Hong Kong is both atmospheric and refreshing; with *GTA* so far unwilling to stretch its wings and have a main instalment set in a foreign country, Hong Kong is a nice change of pace from New York or LA. There's an otherworldly, overbuilt, suffocating quality to the place, all very reminiscent of *Shenmue II*, which regular readers will know is the highest compliment that can ever be paid. The only negative so far is the low level of detail that afflicts some of the models and environments: we received a mission from a woman who looked like she was beamed straight out of the PS2 days, and the pop-in when driving made it feel like we were playing as Mr Magoo.

So far, though, and as long as these flaws don't make it into the release code, *Sleeping Dogs* is shaping up well. There's a slight but noticeable deviation from the *GTA* template. Sure, the base gameplay is the same, but with combo-based fighting served alongside a nice side of environmental destruction and shooting-heavy car combat, it's just different enough to stand out.

By far the most interesting aspect of the preview build, though, is that lead character Wei Shen is an undercover cop, so you'll have to balance your actions as both an officer of the law and a crook against each other. Shen is expected to walk this tightrope by both sides, keeping in check with the few officials on the force who know who he really is while convincing the gangsters, who expect him to dish out street justice, that he's one of them.

Performing certain actions accrues you points to either side, which count towards a rudimentary levelling system. Both factions have specific unlockable perks, from easier entry into locked cars to more potent weapons skills.

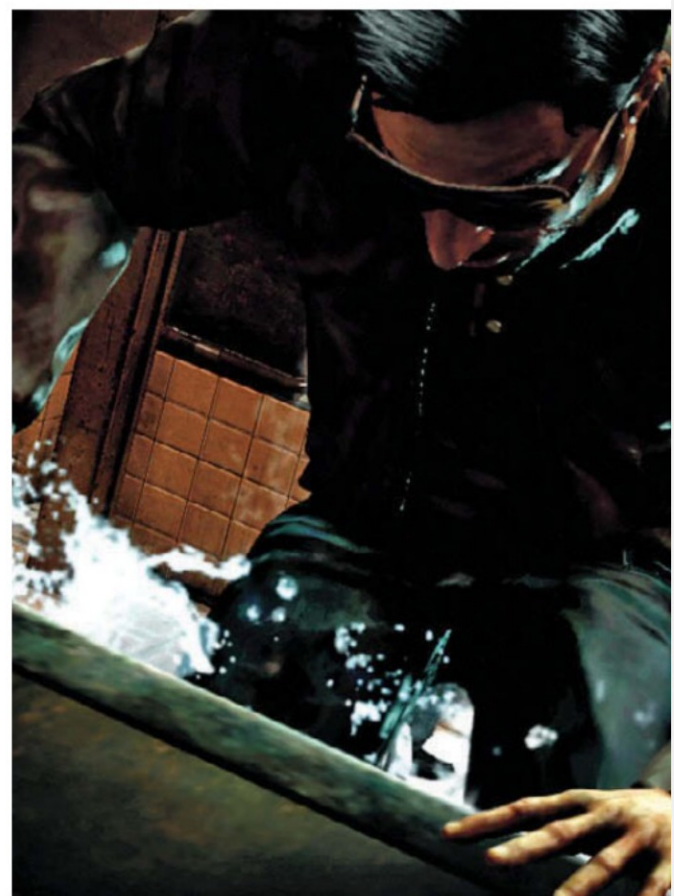
Right now it's impossible to tell if these points and your actions that snare them also branch the narrative of the game, but we'll be a little miffed if they don't. Especially as one of the first game's strengths was its multiple endings and character paths.

What is obvious, however, is that a lot of love has gone into *Sleeping Dogs*, and with a bit of fine-tuning this could be a hit. Look for our review next issue for the final word.

Sleeping Dogs is being developed by United Front Games, which can be found at unitedfrontgames.com



Play always recommends you wear at least a shirt during gunfights.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

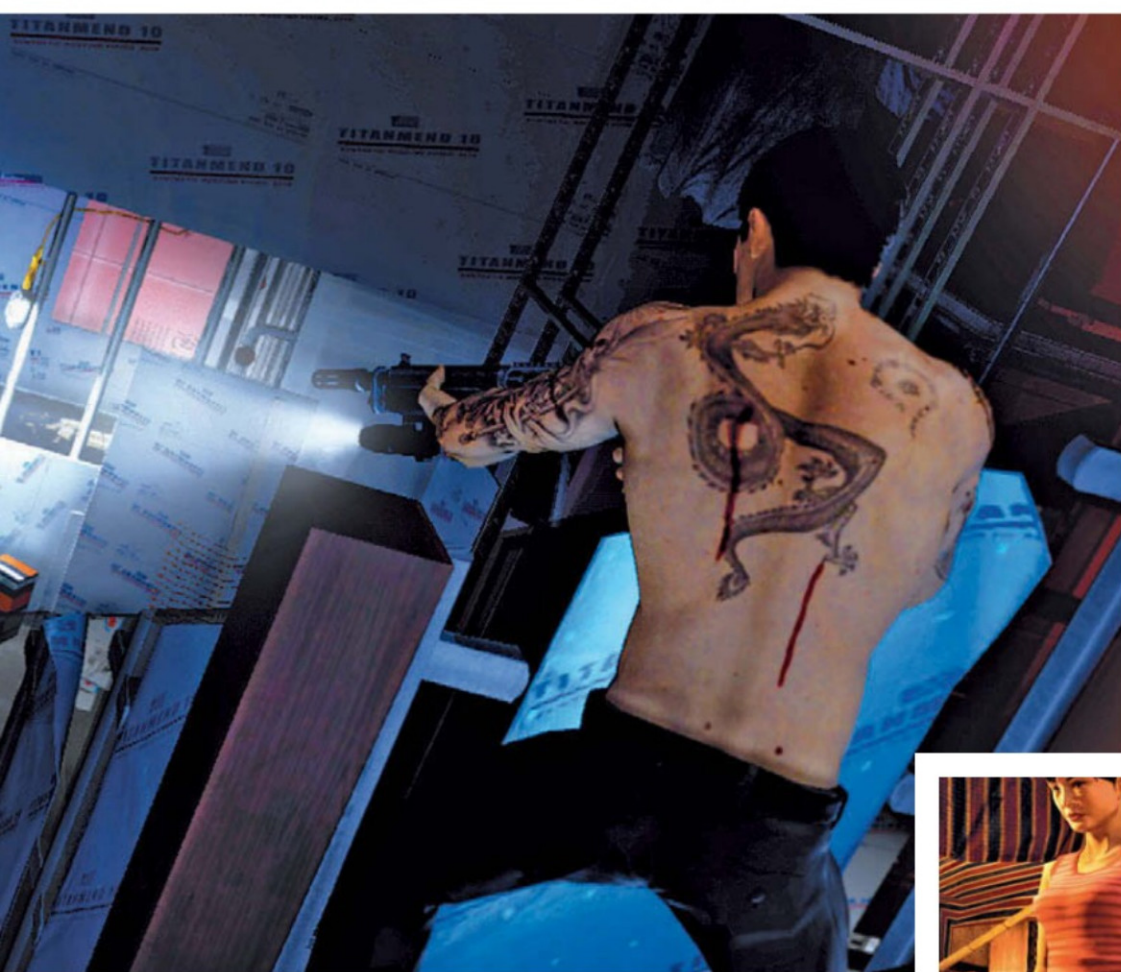
- Hong Kong looks good.
- Good hand-to-hand combat.
- Undercover cop angle is interesting.
- It's a little like PSP launch title *Pursuit Force*!

READ ME

Pressing **Ⓢ** when in a vehicle makes it jerk to the side in a ramming motion. It is also one of the stupidest things we've ever seen in a game.



🔴 In-car combat is plentiful. Good job you've got slow-mo on your side, then.



FACE MAN

It's all about improving your rep

AS THE NEW man in town, Wei has to prove himself before he can... buy clothes. Completing actions for the townspeople will up your 'Face' rating, and the higher it is, the more cool stuff you'll have on your person and at your disposal, and the more you'll be respected and hence trusted.

We thought this was a little ridiculous to start with – surely no shopkeeper would turn down business because he didn't recognise the buyer – but then we remembered about videogame logic and all was fine again. Phew, eh?



🔴 Context-sensitive free running? Thanks, Assassin's Creed!





1 THE STORY CONTINUES

Metro 2033 had two endings – one where protagonist Artyom destroys the Dark Ones and another where he realises the Dark Ones are trying to make peaceful contact. The former is the 'bad' ending and that's the one that will be canon for the sake of *Last Light*'s story, as events pick up following the destruction of the Dark Ones. We don't know exactly what happens, but we can tell you two things. First, Dmitry Glukhovsky, author of the book that *Metro 2033* was based on, has been working with the developers again. Second, *Last Light* has no relevance to the follow-up novel, *Metro 2034*, mostly because the book centres on relationships, characters and struggle. Not exactly FPS material...

RELEASE DATE: Q1 2013

Metro: Last Light

And now for something completely different

PS3

All right. We get it. We really do. Brown tanks, 'hoo-ah!' fist-bumping, dudebro antics and set pieces where all you can control is your character's neck, unable to do anything else but look around because you've been strapped down by developers desperate that you don't miss the carnage they've spent millions of dollars cooking up. You can do that, FPS genre. We get it. But what else are you capable of?

We have the likes of *BioShock* and *Deus Ex*, but we also have *Metro 2033*, a strong outing in the genre that flew under the radar on console because... we're not sure why. Lack of marketing? Lack of understanding? Either way, a sequel is on the way in the form of *Metro: Last Light*, fixing up the mistakes of its predecessor and ensuring those who take a chance on it are in for a dark, grim ride through the Russian apocalypse that will show what the genre can really do.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Mix of styles but mostly grim survival.
- Amazing lighting effects with fancy names we don't remember.
- It's creative, interesting and different.
- Proof that the FPS genre is more than military blockbusters.

READ ME

Following on from *Metro 2033*, Artyom and other survivors deal with a poisoned Moscow populated with demons. Good luck with that.



WIPE YOUR EYES

One of the new mechanics in *Metro: Last Light* is the ability to wipe dirt from your mask. It sounds rubbish, now we're reading it back, and worse now we think about it. Play *Metro: Last Light*, though, and it makes sense. Your gas mask gets blocked by dirt landing on your visor, or blood that inevitably

splatters across it. You then have to make the decision to wipe your visor, or reload your gun, or inject a health pack. Unless you're an octopus. Are you an octopus? Good for you; you won't be playing as one here, though, so you're still only going to have two arms.

SURVIVAL HORROR?

One term being thrown in *Metro: Last Light*'s general direction is 'survival horror', because no one's really sure what to call an FPS game that doesn't have tanks, killstreaks or glowing RPGs with 'USE' and a massive arrow floating above it. It's a genre crossover that's rarely tackled – perhaps *Clive Barker's Jericho*, perhaps *F.E.A.R.* – but we're told *Metro: Last Light* won't neatly fall into that category. It'll have different sections of varying pace, action and tempo, so while the slow crawl through the ruined Moscow we've seen is more survival horror than anything else, the pace increases later in the game.

3



FIVE FACTS



4

I NEED AIR

Metro: Last Light is grim. Even the air is against you. One of the key considerations is that you need air. You need it in every game, presumably, but the air in *Metro* is dirty, full of radiation and probably increases your chance of catching bird flu. This means you need to wear a gas mask, and in order to keep clean

air pumping into your lungs, you have a watch that measures how much longer your air filters will last. It's interesting because we instantly loathe any sort of countdown timer in games, but it works in *Last Light* because it's fairly lenient and does genuinely add to the suffocating (see?) atmosphere.



5 COMBAT SPECIALIST

One area that will be beefed up is the combat. While the gunplay was strong in *Metro 2033*, owing to the rare sense of vulnerability, it needed some clearer feedback and communication to the player. The idea of bullets not penetrating armour was explained once at the start and never again, with the sound effects not accentuating the difference between bullets hitting armour and flesh well enough, and the animation made it hard to tell if enemies were being hit. This is all being changed following feedback from the first game so, in short, shooting things will be fun. That is a good thing.

DARKEST GAME EVER

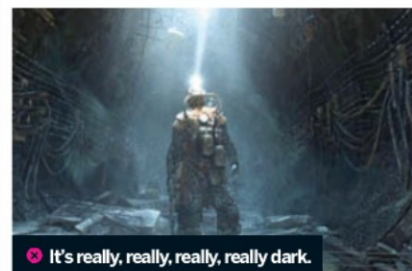
Dark tonally and dark because you can't see a damn thing



So it's really dark in *Metro: Last Light*.



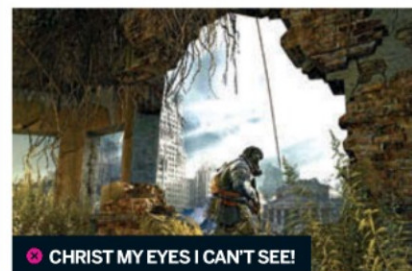
And by dark, we mean it's really dark.



It's really, really, really, really dark.



Why doesn't Artyom have candles? Seriously.



CHRIST MY EYES I CAN'T SEE!

PREVIEW



✦ Pandora has picked up a few more biomes than we saw in the last game's deserts.



✦ The field notes of Sir Hammerlock here are included with the collector's edition of the game.

APOCALYPSE WOW

A few words with Brian Martel, Gearbox chief creative officer

Did you ever expect *Borderlands 2* to happen, seeing as it's hard to introduce and maintain a new IP these days?

Yeah, it can be. *Borderlands 2* was something we obviously hoped for. There were so many features in the first one that we wanted to use, but we ran out of time, so we ended up saying, 'We'll save them for *Borderlands 2*.' We had no idea it would go on to be as successful as it was, though.

Yeah, industry analyst Michael Pachter was all doom and gloom about it, saying it was 'sent out to die'.

[laughs] Yeah, he might be eating his words now!

Was the idea to make the whole thing bigger, better and sillier?

We wanted to add a bit more diversity to the environments for sure. There's snow now, lush jungle environments, and the desert's back, but even it'll have some features we never had before. The game's focused on pure fun, though, like before.

How does Gearbox manage to keep so many projects afloat at the same time, especially considering quite a few other independent developers have gone out of business?

Well, being frugal is one part of it, so we're doing more with less. We also want to come out with stuff that's a bit creative that people will respond to, which is how *Borderlands* happened. We're one of the last few independent developers, and we're doing our best to make games and entertain people.

Speaking of which, you've probably got a certain other IP involving a certain chap with sunglasses bubbling away somewhere, haven't you?

Probably!

You probably can't say anything more about it, can you?

No, probably not.

Oh, you bugger.



✦ Happily, one thing *Borderlands 2* hasn't developed is a need to take itself seriously.





RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER

Borderlands 2

Gearbox goes borderline insane for its post-apocalyptic sequel

PS3

It's probably no coincidence that the day CERN announced that it had found the Higgs boson, thus sending the human race careening down an apocalyptic path of barren, desolate wastelands, *Mad Max* hairstyles and bad food – a bit like Chingford – Gearbox decided to unveil a few more details about its very own wasteland, *Borderlands 2*, sequel to 2009's surprise hit first-person shooter/RPG hybrid.

Borderlands 2 takes place five years after the original game, if the plot really matters to you that much. The main antagonist is Handsome Jack, who's taken over the Hyperion Corporation – because no action game is complete without a despicable all-powerful mega-conglomerate to throw bombs at – and declared himself de facto leader of Pandora, the planet where the game takes place. Naturally, it's up to you to make him regret any such delusions of grandeur, via the medium of bullets.

It's a horrible, shameful thing to descend to such a rubbish cliché, but Gearbox has gone down the old 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it' route. This is still the same *Borderlands* you know and love;

the same gleefully daft, cartoony fix of schlock ultra-violence that's inspired as much by *Looney Tunes* as it is Westerns. Not many other games have you firing a steampunk chaingun with incendiary bullets at incredibly dense bandits while some Ennio Morricone-esque music twangs away. But there's been no resting on laurels either, as *Borderlands 2* adds and improves on enough of the first game to sate bloodthirsty fans, as well as suck in new players.

You'll take the role of one of four new heroes – the chaps from the first game are still around, albeit as NPCs – for *Borderlands 2*, with naturally very different abilities. There's Salvador the Gunzerker, Maya the Siren, Axton the Commando and Zer0 the Assassin. After picking the Gunzerker because the name of that class is too tempting for idiot manchildren, Salvador was sent on an errand in the town of Sanctuary, the hub of the game, thus giving him an excuse to have a wander, see the sights and put some holes in bandits and other monstrosities. Salvador's a tough little bugger; his special skill as a Gunzerker lets him dual-wield any weapon for a time, should he need to go

postal and clear the room of every last wastelander that so much as looks at him funny. It's fabulously cathartic and meat-headed.

Immediately, *Borderlands 2* looks like an improvement over its predecessor. It's clearer, more colourful and a heck of a lot grander than the first game. Funnier too, but more on that later.

Borderlands 2 is designed around pure fun. The RPG elements are back for sure, and in a deeper, more integrated way with lots of lovely number-crunching and grinding, but its primary aim is making enemies explode and die as entertainingly as possible. It doesn't want to punish you for messing up or getting killed; it wants to keep you going for as long as possible while plying you with immensely gratifying kills, loot and XP. Nowhere is this fun philosophy more apparent than the fairly placed checkpoints and the returning Second Wind function, which gives you the chance to get back on your feet should you be able to make a kill when near death. All your guns are stacked with ammo too, and refills drop easily, so there will be no need for timid stealth gameplay or funny crouch-walking to avoid fights.

Even more so than the first game, *Borderlands 2* wants you to channel your inner Arnie. The feedback and recoil on your cel-shaded boomsticks have a good amount of kick, and they sound louder than God having a sneezing fit too. Add the fact that they're outlandish enough to make the weapons in *Bulletstorm* seem like something out of a dull military shooter, and you've a recipe for delicious, gory fun.

The irreverent attitude and character of the first game returns in spades too, and *Borderlands 2* is genuinely chuckle-worthy. In the preview mission there's a teenage bomb expert called Tiny Tina, who's like a chimerical bastardisation of Fatman from *Metal Gear Solid 2* and Princess Superstar, making bombs and dropping verses, as well as petulantly demanding her 'badongadonk' back from some thieving gits.

There were a few bugs to iron out, and it's too early to tell yet whether or not the full game will wear out its welcome a bit, like the first one did after numerous hours, but *Borderlands 2* is very definitely on the righteous path. In a world full of hellish beige and boring cinematic gameplay, we need the impudent, shamelessly silly likes of *Borderlands 2* more than ever. Before CERN destroys us all anyway.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Guns are loud and great to use.
- Unlike most games that try, it's actually funny.
- Never frustrating, even when you accidentally run in front of a train.
- No marines and no harrowing storyline. It's all good clean fun. Except for the killing.

READ ME

Borderlands 2 takes the patented *Borderlands* style to even bigger heights, making the experience better than ever.

Borderlands 2 is being developed by Gearbox Software. Check out www.borderlands2.com for more details.



RELEASE DATE: 31 AUGUST

Tales Of Graces f

You don't care about this game. Namco will change that

PS3 *Tales Of Graces f* is a big deal in Japan. It's not a big deal in the UK. How will Namco Bandai address this? "To make the series more popular in the Western market, we have to consider the way of appealing in the Western market," explains producer Hideo Baba, who's in charge of the whole *Tales* franchise. So maybe he's thinking about more tanks, or Snoop Dogg on the soundtrack, or team deathmatch. "We don't change the storyline or systems for the local version, so we need to accept the Japanese version as it is."

Oh. It's a complete contradiction, but it does make sense – they're

not going to change a damn thing because they know that *Tales Of Graces f* is good enough as it is. It's an action JRPG that favours performing attacks and moving around in real-time. You can attack with a sheathed sword or drawn sword and use CC (Chain Capacity) to perform 'artes', with your CC bar refilled by defending and evading with precise timing. That sounds mental and confusing, but we're only repeating it because it's what Baba told us. We'd just say 'hit things, dodge at the right time, do magic attacks every now and then'. It's strangely compelling stuff, because it's so simple but

has enough variety sprinkled in to keep it fresh.

There's replayability too, in the form of the post-game content that grants you extra storyline, known as Lineage & Legacies, and randomly created dungeons to play through. "It's the same as reading a novel," explains Baba. "If you finish reading a novel, you don't read it again because you know the ending, so it's very difficult to give RPG players incentive to play again. Our team thinks it's important to include tons of replayability features so they can play the game for a long time." We agree. And if there's ever a chance that you'll give JRPGs a try and haven't yet, the lush artwork, simple action and replayability of *Tales Of Graces f* should make it a perfect starting point.

Namco Tales Studio made *Tales Of Graces* when it appeared on Wii, but the studio has since been closed down. Hence, Namco Bandai is the place to keep up to date with *Tales* news, found at namco.com/console/tales-of-graces-f

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Simple battle system with CC and artes moves.
- Gorgeous art style.
- Replayability thanks to extra chapter and random dungeons.
- Tons of DLC.

READ ME

Failing to protect his childhood friend Sophie after they encounter an unknown monster as children, Asbel Lhant trains as a knight when older to atone for his failure.



✖ *Tales Of Graces f* came out in Japan in 2010. We hope it's worth the wait.

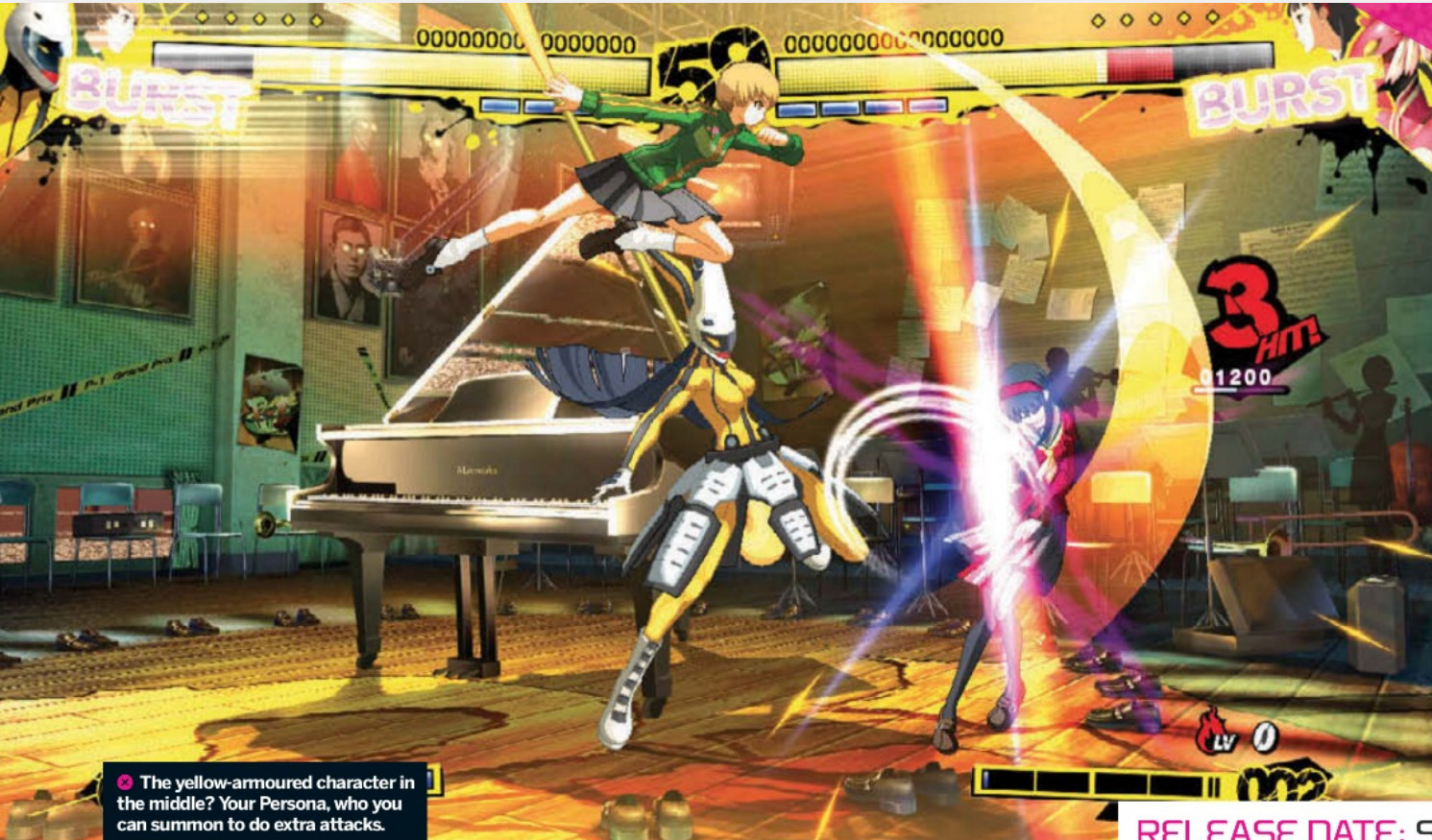


✖ Asbel, the main character, in his adult form. Supposedly.

DLC BONANZA

Costumes, attachments, boost up abilities...

DLC IS EXPECTED for Namco Bandai RPGs, and *Tales Of Graces f* is no different. There will be DLC to change your character's look, with costumes packing boosted abilities. There will also be DLC attachments for your weapons, and the Day 1 Edition, exclusive to Europe, will pack in plenty of DLC. So it's just extra stuff, then, and nothing crucial to enjoyment of the game, but still, it's also a little disheartening to hear rampant DLC talk before the game itself hits the shelves.



✳ The yellow-armoured character in the middle? Your Persona, who you can summon to do extra attacks.



RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER

ISN'T PERSONA AN RPG?

As in role-playing game, not rocket-propelled grenade

WELL, YES, IT is. *Shin Megami Tensei: Persona 4* was the snappily named RPG that was released for PlayStation 2 in 2008 and will see its remake hit Vita in October 2012. The *Persona* series itself has been going since 1996, so it's quite the departure for a fighting game spin-off to suddenly show up. Still, if we can play as Teddie, then that's all we care about. For all games.



Persona 4 Arena

The deadliest teddy bear of all time

PS3 Fighting games make no sense. Who arranged for them to fight at that specific time, in that specific place? Why are they able to get back to their feet when each round is done and why does their opponent let them? Why is there an invisible wall stopping them from walking backwards too far? Why can they jump so high? Why don't any of them own normal clothes or say normal things? The more you think about it, the weirder they get.

Persona 4 Arena has found the weirdness dial and spun it as far as it will go, the end result being a game that has a boxer wearing a cape, a robotic girl armed with axe and shadow demon, and a girl who throws fans, flames and flaming fans. Oh, and Teddie, a girl in a teddy bear outfit who jumps out of stacked television sets, rolls oil drums along the floor and stuffs her opponent in a rocket while saluting as they're blasted off into space.

Given that Arc System Works is at the helm for this one, that's no real surprise, as the same studio was

behind the equally loopy *BlazBlue* and *Guilty Gear*. The difference here is the learning curve has been flattened out slightly, so getting into *Persona 4 Arena* isn't as difficult as those games. You have two basic attack buttons and two further buttons that control your Persona. This is a guardian spirit of sorts, which provides extra attacks and moves, although they can only take four hits before being temporarily knocked out of the match.

The fights centre around control of your Persona – attacking the other players, protecting your own, adapting when a Persona is temporarily lost – rather than knowing combos that last 20 minutes and require 3 trillion button taps. Throw in the fast speed, ridiculous special moves, and a story mode that builds upon the previous *Persona* RPGs, and you have a fighting game that relishes the genre's eccentric quirks.

Persona 4 Arena is being developed by Arc System Works, the same team responsible for the *BlazBlue* series. Keep up to date at arcsystemworks.eu



✳ We're pretty sure we had a nightmare like this once.



✳ Here's Teddie, ready to do some teddy-like things.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- From the makers of *BlazBlue* and *Guilty Gear*.
- Persona attacks add variety to gameplay.
- Simplified fighting system compared to *BlazBlue*.
- TEDDIE.

READ ME

The *Persona* characters do battle in a fighting game spin-off of the famed Japanese role-playing series.

PREVIEW



✖ We think 47's cover might be blown.



✖ Spot the murderous assassin.



✖ Remember, kids, don't do this at home.



✖ We don't like 47's new style.



THE CHOICE IS YOURS

Either way, someone's going to die

HITMAN'S MAIN DRAW has always been choice, and *Absolution* isn't looking to buck the trend. In the early days of the series, just getting the job done quietly and efficiently would do, but as it has progressed, the emphasis has shifted from clean, inconspicuous kills – a nice, silenced bullet in the back of the head, say – to making every hit look like a tragic accident.

Even so, we'd genuinely love to see a return of *Hitman 2*'s weapons shed, which enabled you to take any weapon you'd nicked off-site in a previous mission into subsequent ones. With 47 on the run we're not holding our breath, but if we can't take a scalpel on-mission we're going to be very upset.

UPDATE



RELEASE DATE: 20 NOVEMBER

A classic Hitman pose.

Hitman: Absolution

Back in black



Rule one in videogame land: do not annoy your fans, especially if they love your product for what it is already. Rule two: don't then turn it into everything that it's not.

Which is what, thanks to an action-heavy opening PR salvo, seemed to have happened to *Hitman*. If 47 were real, he would have been hired to take IO out by now. The backlash was as obvious as it was intense. But good news is here: we've played *Hitman: Absolution*, and it's cut from the same cloth as its predecessors, just with a few tweaks. The demo level saw 47 tasked with offing a corrupt local gang boss in Chinatown, and, mercifully, the number of deadly options available was on par with previous games.

Pushing our way through the atmospheric and heavily populated

setting, which was immediately reminiscent of *Blood Money*'s Mardi Gras level, infused with *Contracts*' Hong Kong flavour, we saw a wealth of opportunity available. We could attach a bomb to the King of Chinatown's sports car, before setting off the alarm and then detonating it when he came to investigate. That's for amateurs, obviously, especially as it makes his security detail come running. Much better was the fact that we could distract a local fishmonger, taking poisonous cuts and sneaking them into his food. Also on the table was the option to kill his drug dealer, take his clothes and lure the target round the corner for a hit... but not from the bong.

If we wanted to be totally old-school about it, there was a convenient sniper rifle to be found in an apartment overlooking the

target, but the true assassin makes it all look like an accident. Watching our mark intently, we noticed him dwelling below a shipping pallet. Wrong move: one well-placed pistol shot later, our boy is dead and we're strolling away without a care in the world.

It's all very *Hitman*, which pleases us – and you, we'd wager – no end. Yes, it's been tarted up a little bit to appeal to those whose attention spans are measured in milliseconds, but pay closer attention to these changes and they seem like natural evolutions of existing mechanics.

Take the new Instinct mode, for example. Now 47 can use his superior tracking skills to highlight guards, cops and other security forces, also illuminating their patrol routes. It seems silly to put it like that, but when you consider that watching the equally unrealistic

real-time map screen for hours on end to gauge this same info was par for the course in the previous games, you get why IO has done it.

So, it's classic *Hitman*, just with a few new bells and whistles to make sure all those *COD* players don't kick their own faces off in frustration. Under that, though, is the same blend of creative killing, macabre humour and awesome environment tech. The series needed to change, in some ways, because although we remember the good times – successful hits, getting the Silent Assassin ranking – we also remember the sheer frustration of having to reload and retry over and over.

Eliminating, or at least minimising, the player's exposure to this is the way to go. When we first heard about Instinct, we thought we'd prefer to play with it turned off, but after seeing it in action we're prepared to give it a go. Crucially, it still feels like *Hitman*, and as long as it does that, IO is back in business.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?



Classic *Hitman*...



Crowd tech looks great.



...with some new skills.



Accidents are back.

READ ME

On the run from the police and his own handlers, the world's best assassin finds himself on a collision course with a wealthy magnate.

Hitman: Absolution is being developed by IO Interactive. Check it out at ioi.dk

PREVIEW



RELEASE DATE: TBC 2013

Injustice: Gods Among Us

Liu Kang puts his Batman costume on

PS3

What do you get if you cross *Mortal Kombat* and DC Comics? *Mortal Kombat vs DC Universe*, which was an awkward mess of infinities, stiff animation and Fatalities as violent as a children's piñata party. NetherRealm followed that up with *Mortal Kombat*, an outing that managed to salvage the series and prove the studio knew what it's doing, so now it's back with a new question. What do you get if you slap DC Comics skins on a *Mortal Kombat* game?

The answer, bar a few tweaks and pinches here and there, is *Injustice*:

Gods Among Us. Ed Boon ran through a 15-minute live demo of the title at Evo, the biggest fighting game tournament in the world, and came out the other end unscathed. Proof, if it was needed, that *Injustice* has something to it that will appeal to the hardcore as well as the casual crowd brought in by the appeal of Batman slapping Superman about. But what gameplay is actually powering the DC-infused fighter? Let's take a closer look...

NetherRealm has taken a break from *Mortal Kombat* to cook up *Injustice: Gods Among Us*. Follow its progress at netherrealm.com

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- ❑ *Mortal Kombat* with DC characters!
- ❑ You can throw cars at people's heads.
- ❑ But it's definitely not *Mortal Kombat vs DC Universe*.
- ❑ Plus you can beat up Superman with Batman.

READ ME

DC heroes and villains get together, have a fight, then have a laugh about it later in the evening while sipping on some port and wincing as it touches their bruised, split lips

1

Having finished his stint in Arkham City, Nightwing is now limbering up for battle in *Injustice: Gods Among Us*, along with Cyborg. He joins Superman, Flash, Batman, Solomon Grundy, Wonder Woman and Harley Quinn as the confirmed characters thus far. Other DC characters likely to feature? Green Lantern, Catwoman, Power Girl. Other DC characters less likely to feature? Aqualad, Booster Gold, Peacemaker. There will be at least 24 characters in total.



2

There are two classes of character to choose from in *Injustice*: power characters and gadget characters. The former are those like Solomon Grundy and Cyborg, specialising in chain throws and using background objects in different ways, such as the ability to slam cars and throw barrels. Gadget characters like Batman and Harley Quinn tend to fight with projectiles, using Batarangs and grapple guns while slamming opponents into cars, and rolling barrels along the ground rather than throwing them. We'll see if there are more classes of characters when more faces are announced.



3

Those who played *Mortal Kombat* will immediately notice that *Injustice* packs similar animations, which can look stilted and stiff, especially when transitioning between moves. Fortunately, there are a lot of extra touches – Superman ripping his shirt open to show the 'S' before the fight starts, dents appearing in the ground as fighters get slammed around, and win poses that have Superman hovering above the Earth, Batman perched on a cathedral gargoyle and so on. Individually, not much, but together they help add to the game's atmosphere. No blood or Fatalities, though.

4



Look behind Cyborg. See those round things on the ground? Those are grenades, and anyone playing in the Batcave can actually pick them up and use them in the fight. Interactivity with the environment is a big part of *Injustice*. You can hit the big red button in the Batcave to fire missiles from the Batmobile, slam opponents' faces into nearby cars, hit them into power generators and so on. It's gimmicky, but it's also going to make messing around in the arenas for the first few times fun, as you experiment with the backgrounds and see what extra weapons you can bring to the fight.

5



FIRST LOOK

Multipart arenas aren't anything new in fighting games, but Ed Boon and co were the first to pioneer the idea with *Mortal Kombat 3*, which let you uppercut opponents through the ceiling and into new areas. What's different here is how each level has several stages to it rather than just two, and how you can freely switch between the areas. For example, the Batcave lets you smash your opponent through the floor and then into a lift to head back up to the higher level, while in the Fortress of Solitude you can throw your opponent through structures to new areas.

6



What about the special moves? Superman has an air dash, dash punch and 'heat vision', which are his eye lasers. Flash has a spin kick, which bounces opponents off the walls for combos, and a run move where he can go low with a slide or overhead with a leaping punch. Solomon Grundy uses chain throws to do damage but can keep it simple by pulling out a knife from his back to slash away. Batman uses Batarangs and a grapple gun, and can surround himself with bats to counter incoming moves, popping the other player into the air for a combo if it connects.

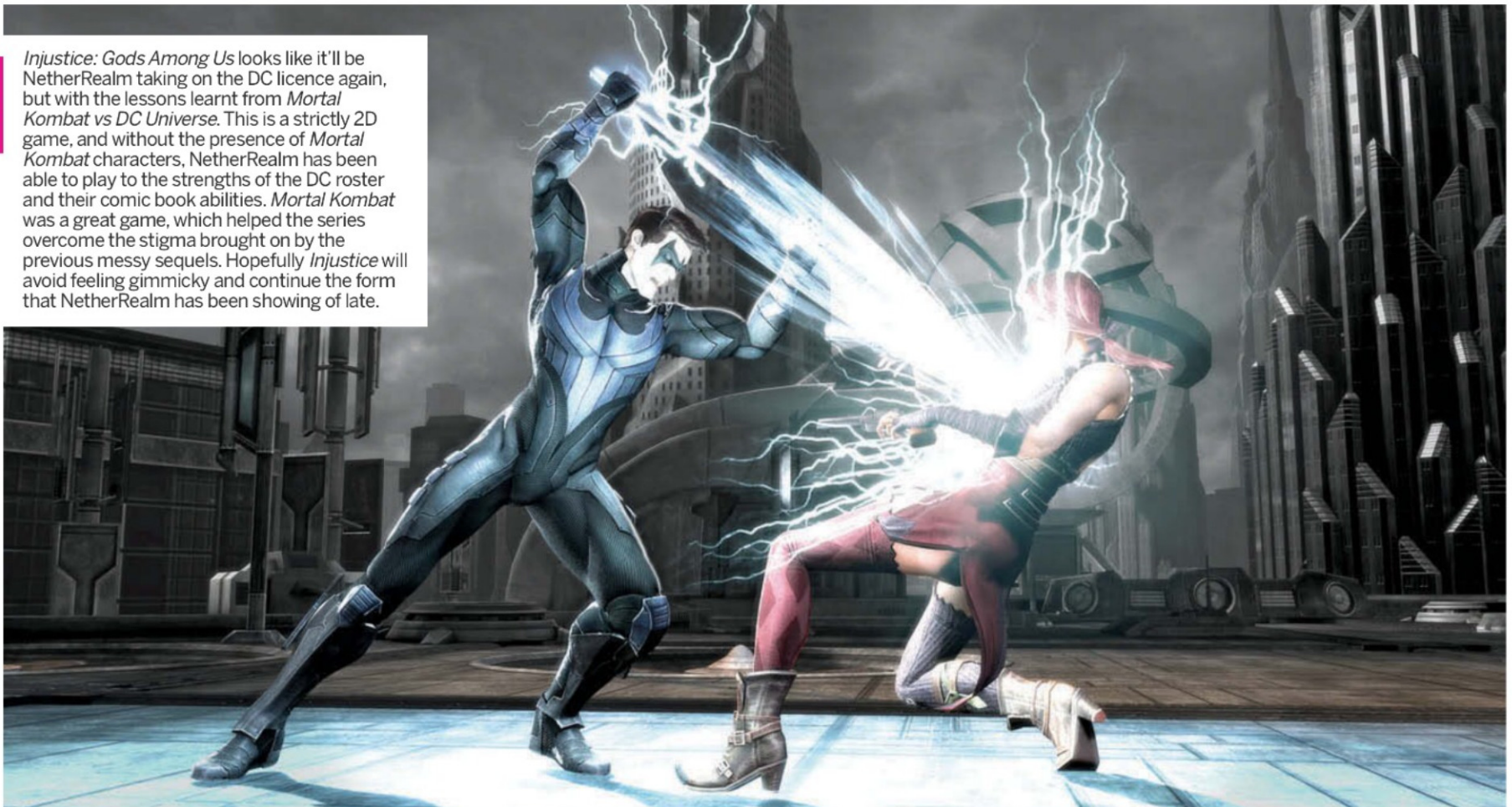
7



Still, the extravagant super moves are the money shot here, and this is where NetherRealm is pushing the OTT factor of *Injustice*. Flash's super sees him run a ring around the Earth to build up momentum for a single knockout blow, while Superman punches his opponent into space, flies after him, and follows up by punching him back down to the ground. Batman's is a little more sedate – tying his opponent up with a grapple gun then drop-kicking them – while Grundy pulls a tombstone out of his chest and cracks it on his enemy's skull.

8

Injustice: Gods Among Us looks like it'll be NetherRealm taking on the DC licence again, but with the lessons learnt from *Mortal Kombat vs DC Universe*. This is a strictly 2D game, and without the presence of *Mortal Kombat* characters, NetherRealm has been able to play to the strengths of the DC roster and their comic book abilities. *Mortal Kombat* was a great game, which helped the series overcome the stigma brought on by the previous messy sequels. Hopefully *Injustice* will avoid feeling gimmicky and continue the form that NetherRealm has been showing of late.



PREVIEW

RELEASE DATE: TBC 2013

Aliens: Colonial Marines

We chat to Brian Burleson, senior producer at Gearbox, about the upcoming franchise-redeemer



Did you guys learn anything from Rebellion's *Aliens vs Predator* games?

Oh yeah, we learnt a lot of stuff. Lots and lots of stuff. Some based on how to make a good game and some ways not to. Those sorts of things, that's kind of what it's all about. You try things out and try to do things better.

What are the inherent difficulties when adapting the licence, particularly that you felt Rebellion stumbled on?

Rebellion didn't kill it with the Xenos and marines. It's hard to make three games at once. Three very different games at once. And so they didn't focus a lot of time on the marines side of things, which is one of the advantages of working on *Aliens: Colonial Marines* as we get to do that, which is awesome. One of the biggest challenges – and Rebellion had this too – is how lethal the Xenos should be and what people believe to be Xenomorphs. A lot of the time, depending on what film you saw first will change how people perceive the alien. Whatever the first film you saw is leaves a lasting impression. We're closer to *Aliens* than the other films, being the sequel to *Aliens* in direction and having guns and shooting lots of Xenos. So yeah, we learnt a lot.

The game was recently delayed until early 2013. What was the reason behind the push back?

We technically never announced a date. That's one of the things with development, production-wise – we want to see when our game is going to be done and when it is going to go, and then you peg a date and you have to be really confident about that. And we never pegged a date before because we wanted to make sure it was really good before we did. So it hasn't been delayed because we never had a date – you can say that now if we slip past that date. Production is normal.

Story-wise, how much freedom have you had to play with the *Aliens* lore?

Quite a bit, actually. The stories themselves... there's a couple of different layers to it. There's the stuff that happens in the timeline, the canonical explanation of the creatures and the technology and those bits and pieces that have been very consistent within the story. That's good because it gives you a framework on which to base things, the characters, the events and all the other stuff. We had complete freedom to find that within the universe.

Aliens: Colonial Marines is being developed by Gearbox Software. Find out more at www.sega.co.uk/alienscolonialmarines/

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

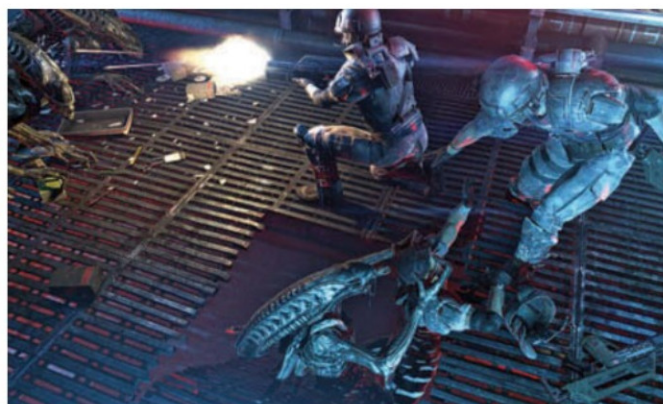
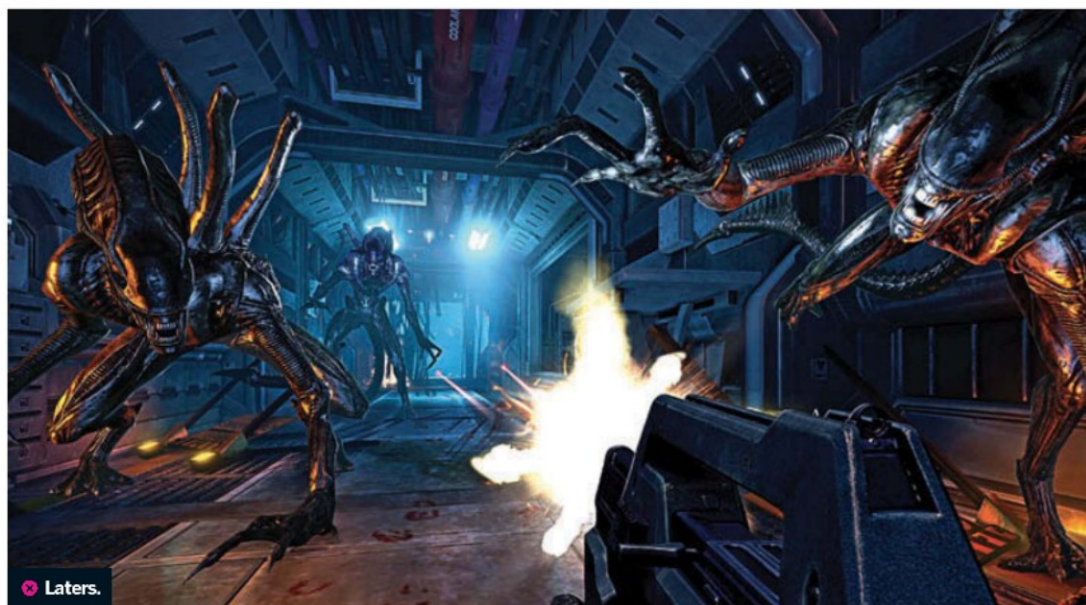
- It's very 'Aliens'...
- The pulse rifle sounds like a pulse rifle
- ... which is important
- Suitably atmospheric

READ ME

You can use a welder in *Aliens: Colonial Marines* to fasten doors shut behind you, just like they did in the film. This makes us so, so happy.



Surprise!

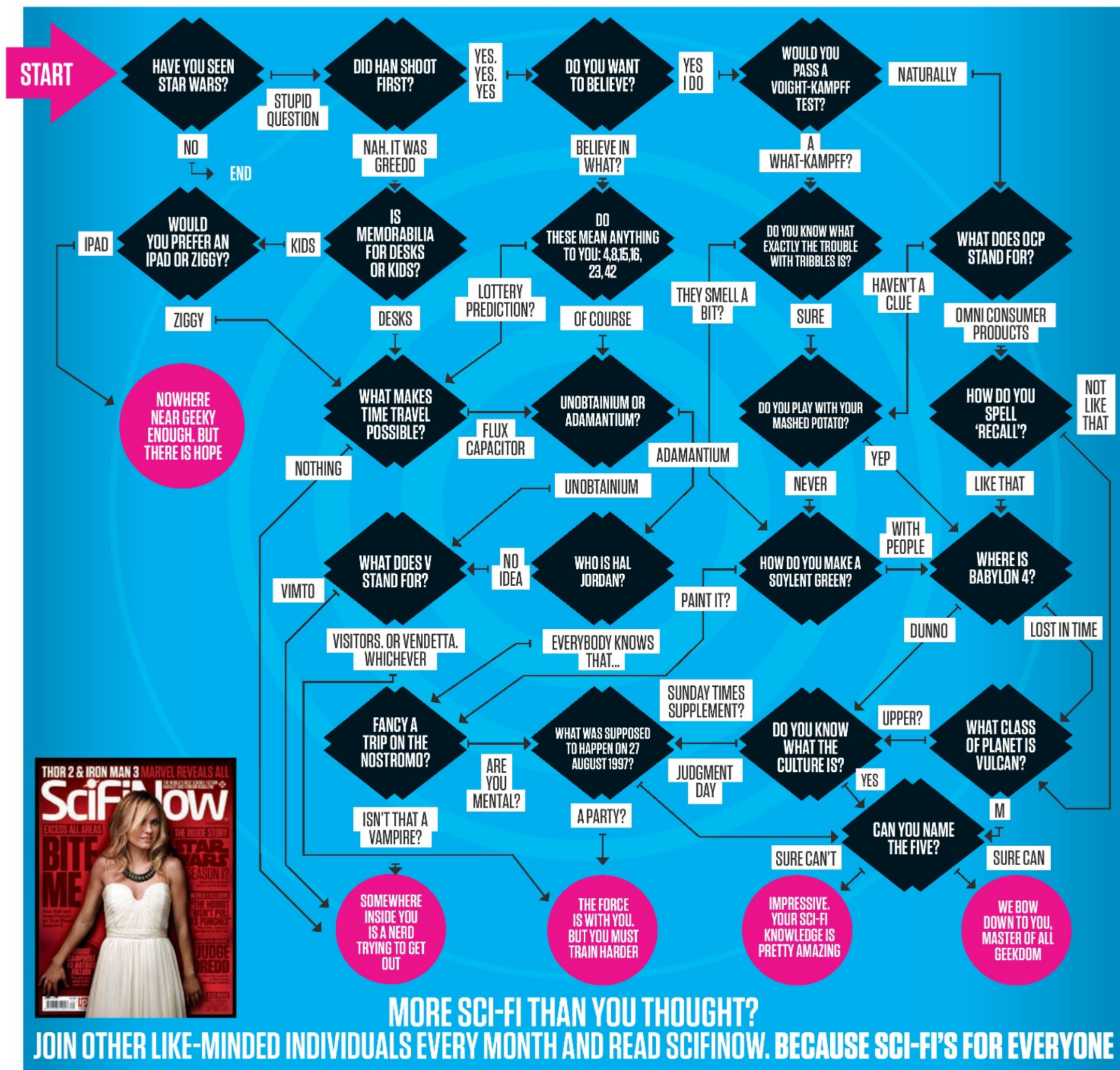


THREE WEEKS NOTICE

A direct sequel to *Aliens*?

YUP. WHEN YOUR gang of marines pitches up to the Sulaco for a good old inter-species deathmatch, it's been only three weeks since the end of the second film. As such, you'll run into familiar sights, including the bottom half of Bishop's body. Gross.

Use the **SciFiNow** flowchart to find out...



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FARCRY3

"WE ARE ADULTS MAKING A GAME FOR ADULTS"

LEAD DESIGNER **MARK THOMPSON** TALKS ABOUT THE ADULT THEMES THAT WILL LEAD UBISOFT'S UPCOMING SHOOTER...

Your E3 presentation caused quite a stir. Does *Far Cry 3* approach themes such as nudity, mental instability and violence in a sophisticated way? Are games ready for that?

We have a lot of respect for our subject matter. We approach it with maturity and honesty. Moreover, we respect gamers, and we know that they will treat the material with the same respect.

After all, we are adults making a game for adults. It's not about cheap thrills and titillation; it's about exploring mature themes in ways that other entertainment media have been doing for years.

We aren't doing anything that hasn't been seen on post-watershed television, but the reaction has been that we are taking a risk, or being bold, because those areas of life are often left unexplored in games, especially in the FPS genre, where *Far Cry 3* will really stand out as a different experience.

***Far Cry 3* combines the jungle exploration and open approach of the first two games. What features are you bringing to the series that will make *FC3* distinctive compared to the others?**

Far Cry has always been about freedom and exploration, and the way you are able to explore the living islands while completing missions with your own style of approach is something that we absolutely continue in *Far Cry 3*.

Where we expand from previous games in the series is in the powerful narrative and the cast of memorable characters. We wanted to take players on a real emotional journey as you learn to survive these islands of insanity as Jason Brody.

As the narrative unfolds, as Jason explores the dark heart of the islands, he'll be pushed to his limits both physically and psychologically, and we take players along the same journey.



How big a portion of the game is dedicated to multiplayer and co-op? How will the co-op campaign differ to single-player?

Multiplayer is an important part of the experience and the reason we chose to collaborate with Ubisoft Massive in Sweden, who are exclusively dedicated to *Far Cry 3* multiplayer.

They're working on PvP, co-op, the in-game map editor and a number of online social features that allow the community to share assets, tweak their profiles, and communicate on the web as well as in-game.

Co-op takes place in the same part of the world, but the locations are unique. In fact, we created a completely new island for the co-op campaign.

There are six co-op missions that take a different group of characters, throw them into the Vaas world, and challenge them to survive in an entirely different way than Jason Brody does in the single-player adventure.

There are a lot of shared themes between the two experiences, but everything was built separately and you won't see the same content recycled from one campaign to the next.

How creative can players get with the map editor? Is it more accessible than the *Far Cry 2* editor and how

integral is the creation and sharing of maps this time?

The *Far Cry* map-making community is fantastic; they make some great content and we spent a lot of time looking at ways to improve the experience

for everyone: great map makers, and for less experienced players who just want to access great new maps.

We improved the tools, the interface, and the usability of the in-game editor over the last three years. Now it's easier to get into map-making. A key focus for us was also making sure that we were supporting the work done by the community.

We have a whole new tier ranking system to ensure that great maps get promoted and that it's easier to share and find great maps. I can't wait to see what the community will create; it is super exciting to see some of the insane ideas that come from a powerful tool and a great map-making community like we have with *Far Cry*.

How 'open' is *Far Cry 3* compared to its predecessor? How does it avoid the pitfalls of *Far Cry 2*?

The development of *Far Cry 2* taught us how to create a truly open world, and we had the luxury of building on that experience when we started developing *Far Cry 3*. The advantage is that we can look at some of the rough edges, listen to the community, and make sure we focus our energies in the right places.

We knew from the start that openness was something we wanted to embrace so, for three years, we

pushed the technology hard, to the point that we could create a truly open-world experience with no restrictions on where you can go or what you can see: now the mountains aren't just backdrop; they're part of the world. You can climb them, look around at the entire world, then take off on a glider to explore from above. At the same time the world has to be more than just open; it was important that it really felt alive.

The islands are a dangerous place, so of course you will see hostiles. Some areas of the world are controlled by hostile groups. If you explore the open world and capture a key enemy outpost then that area is no longer hostile.

We wanted the player to have a noticeable impact on the world. When an area of the world is liberated like this, you will unlock new stores, quests, activities, and a host of new opportunities in the open world.

What are the standout enhancements in *Far Cry 3*'s Dunia 2 engine? Can we expect to see it in future Ubisoft games?

In addition to delivering technology that can provide a true open-world experience, the other main enhancement made in Dunia for *Far Cry 3* is the overhaul of the lighting pipeline. In *Far Cry 3* we are able to create complex interior spaces, which wasn't previously possible.

This gave us the opportunity to take the player through some incredible environments, so the places you explore will keep surprising you until the end of the game.

We'll take you into underwater caves, sinking ships, forgotten temples, WWII bunkers, and the list goes on.

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about freedom and
exploration, and
the way you are
able to explore the
living islands while
completing
missions ”



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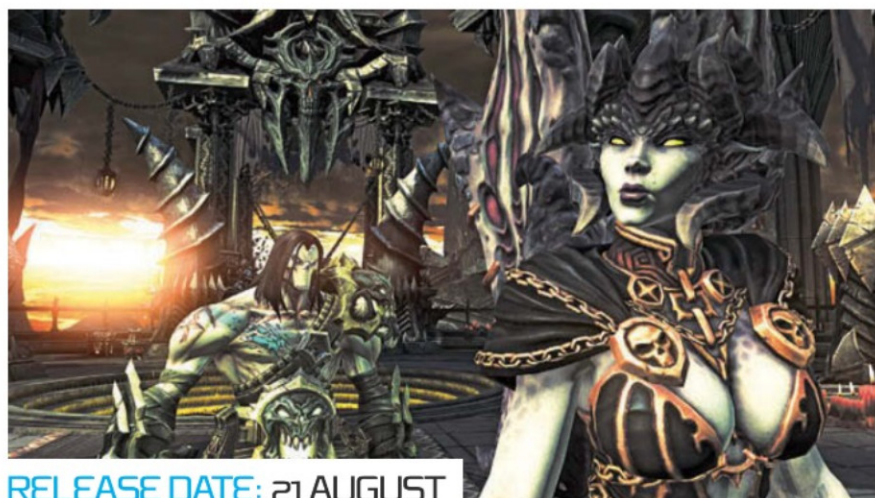
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REVIEWS

We play games and give them a score



RELEASE DATE: 21 AUGUST

Darksiders II

It's not just a one horseman race



DETAILS

Publisher
THQ
Developer
Vigil Games
Price
£49.99
Players
1
Genre
Action-adventure
Age Rating
15+
Website
www.darksiders.com
Twitter
@Darksiders
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PS3

Darksiders has quickly established itself as home to men of deep voices, with *Darksiders II* throwing the delightfully raspy gravel voice of Michael Wincott into this living comic book world. Everybody's favourite *Highlander II* actor takes the central role of Death: Horseman of the Apocalypse, brother to the first game's War and on a quest to absolve said brother of the wrongdoing for which he was wrongly accused last time around.

It's a sequel, yes, but it runs parallel to the events of the first game. This makes for an experience that doesn't leave those who didn't play the original game out in the cold. You have things explained to you from a mechanical and storyline perspective and, while veterans will get more out of returning characters and locales, this is very much an experience that doesn't necessitate you having played *Darksiders*. If anything, it's a bonus to have not played the previous game, as many elements returning from first time around will feel fresh instead of rehashed.

Generally speaking, this is a slightly improved version of the game that released back in 2010. It's a vaguely open collection of hub worlds that will take dozens of hours to fully explore, filled with *Zelda*-like dungeons that require deft platforming skills and the

ability to solve what can sometimes be rather taxing puzzles. Admittedly they're not hard in the sense that you'll go to bed weeping at your inability to solve them, but there are times you will find yourself stuck, wondering what it is you need to do. Then you'll see the damn switch in a crevice just below and you'll slap yourself on your stupid forehead.

Combat is one of the biggest pillars supporting the game, as you would expect. At first it might seem to be a haphazard dance

Just when you're getting irritated, it switches what you're actually doing back to platforming or exploring

simulator that involves *International Track & Field* levels of button jabbing to see any success, and you wouldn't be far wrong taking that approach, to be honest. But the fighting system does go deeper than that, fortunately.

If you're thinking of comparisons you'll want to go more *God Of War*, *Dante's Inferno* or, naturally, the original *Darksiders*. Two attack buttons, simple combos, a satisfactory move list that can be built upon as the game progresses, and dodging that, while functional, never quite feels perfect. In other words, as with seemingly everything else, *Darksiders II*'s

combat suffers because it isn't as good as *Bayonetta*'s. That's not to say it's bad, but it feels stiff and somewhat clunky on occasion – more than a few times you will be on the receiving end of a sustained attack thanks to the system letting you down rather than your demonstrable inability to fell a legion of corrupted angels.

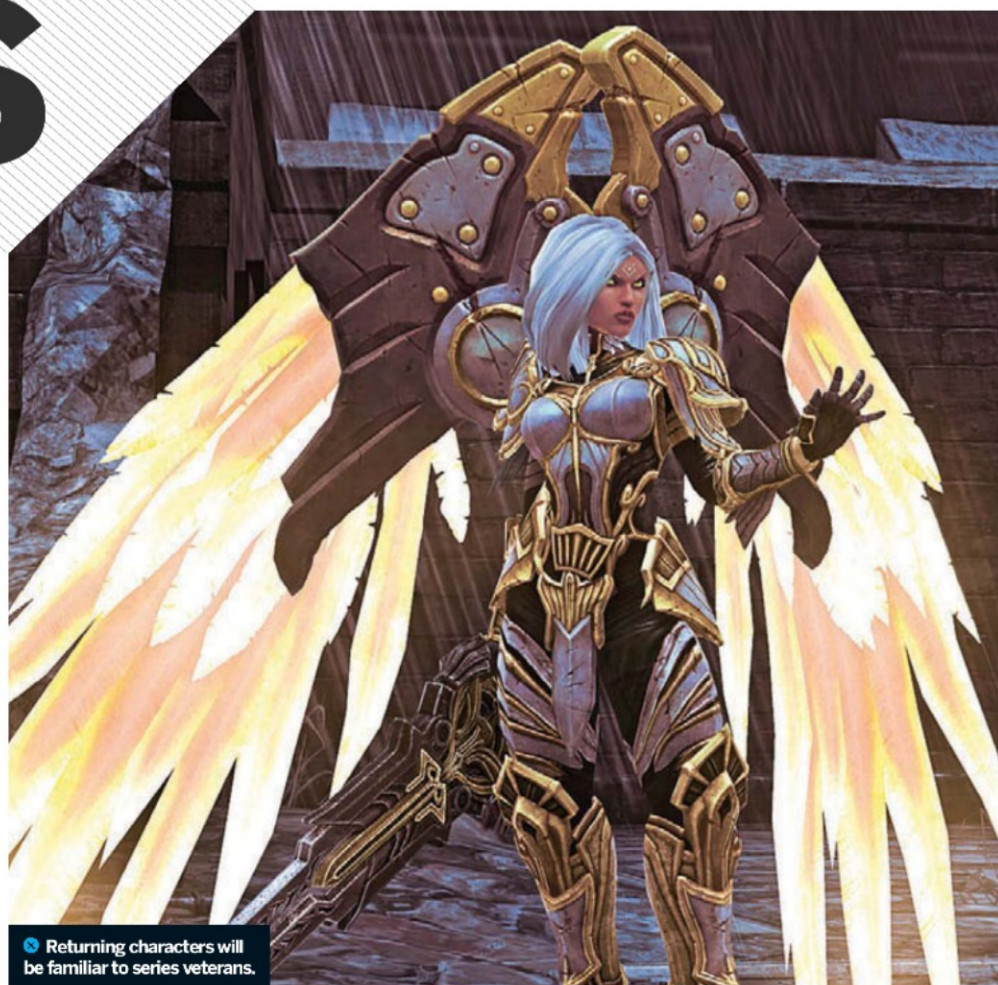
If combat made up the entirety of the game – as in, if it reached *God Of War* levels of ubiquity – *Darksiders II* would suffer as much as those souls trapped in Death's chest-wound-cum-amulet. But it isn't, and as such it doesn't, because it works well enough to sustain its periods of brawling and then, just

when you're getting irritated by a seemingly unavoidable attack walloping you in the back again, it switches up what you're actually doing back to platforming, exploring or – at one point – third-person shooting.

No, really.

And that's another element that has made the jump from the original to *Darksiders II*: there's certainly no shortage of things to do. Whereas last time it could be put down to the fact that the game was in development for 10 billion years (rough estimate), this time it just feels like the devs at Vigil set out to make a game that is the equivalent of the characters in it: massive, over-the-top and including all of the things ever.

The main quest will take you a couple of dozen hours on a leisurely playthrough, but there's so much else to do that you're unlikely to clock this one in a single weekend's sustained play. If you do, let us know – we'll send you a certificate or something. But it'll be hard, for this is a game – again, like its forebear – that is absolutely littered with side quests and collectables.



Returning characters will be familiar to series veterans.



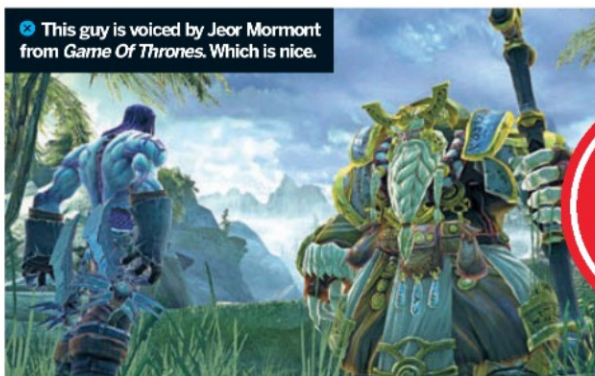
Smashing things: it's always funny.



Much as he looks like Skeletor, he's not Skeletor.



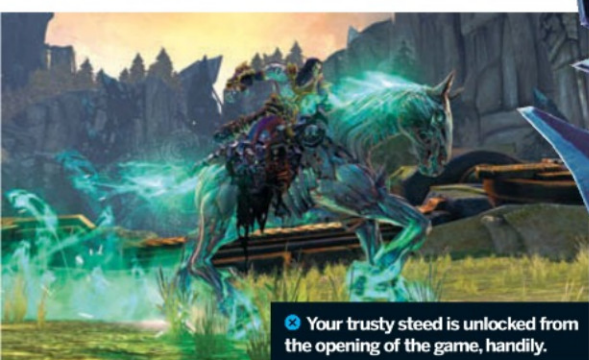
This guy is voiced by Jeor Mormont from *Game Of Thrones*. Which is nice.



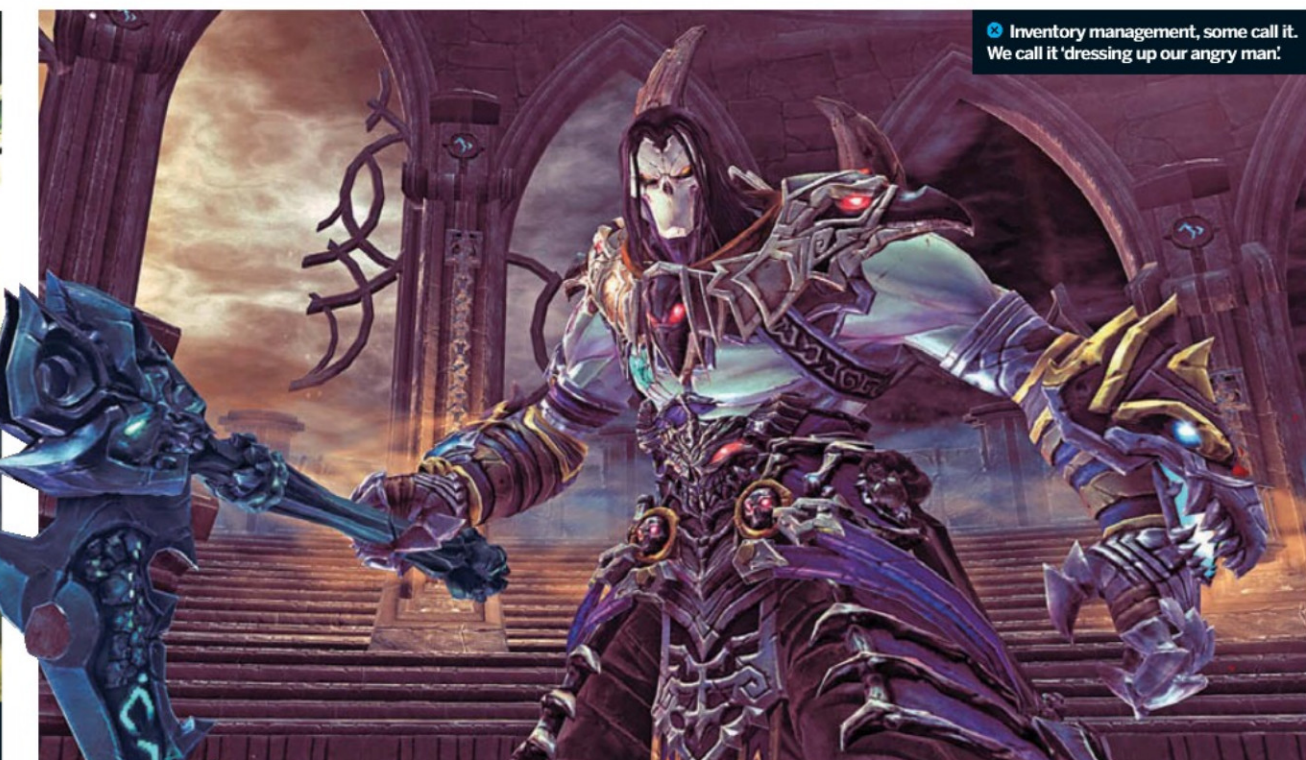
FETCH!

Be a good boy and fetch, yeah?

WHEN CONFRONTED BY our first fetch quest, we let out the now-traditional sigh. But then Death reacted in a snarky fashion, wondering aloud why he should lower himself to such menial tasks. And we were lifted. Sure, the mini-quests like these are the same as in all other games, but the simple fact that there's justification in the internal logic of the game – Death is against the idea, but he will do it if it's on his way, though only because he'll get something out of it – makes us smile. It's little elements like this that come together and make you more accepting of elements that would otherwise be written off as derivative.



Your trusty steed is unlocked from the opening of the game, handily.

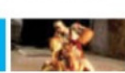


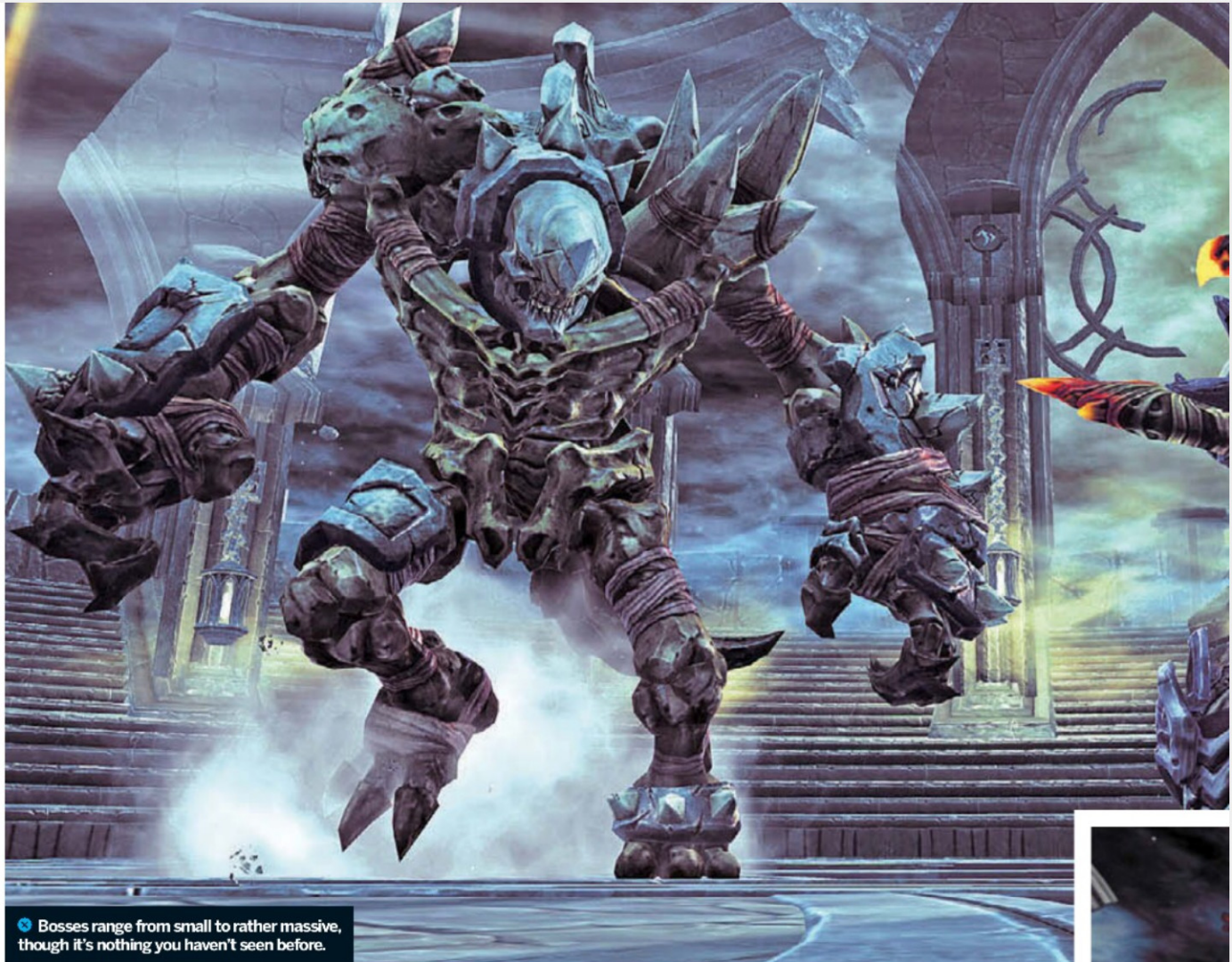
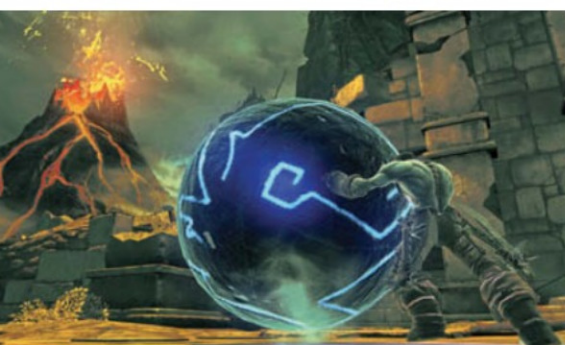
Inventory management, some call it. We call it 'dressing up our angry man.'

You have your main missions, the overriding goal being to seek the absolution of your brother, War. There are plenty of tasks to further that end. But then there are the fetch quests, because that guy wants his compass back – fortunately, the mighty Death is suitably unperturbed at the notion of picking up trinkets for a man who should do it himself, regardless of whether you take on the mission or not. There's the ongoing treasure hunt for hidden gems to feed a rock creature, who smacks ever so much of Rock Biter from *The NeverEnding Story*. Not forgetting Vulgrim's need for you to collect pages from the Book of the Dead, or the collection of ancient relics in exchange for a multitude of different rewards from the goat-like, pipe-smoking merchant.

There's a lot to do, basically put. But this isn't 'a lot to do' in the sense that you will definitely want to do it all. This is 'a lot to do' in the sense that many are sure to see these peripheral concerns as a time sink not worth the effort. But those with the patience and, as it seems, the Vigil mindset will be traipsing around the numerous realms of *Darksiders II* for many an hour – and they will be rewarded handsomely for doing so. Not that we'd found the last few pages for Vulgrim to open that blasted vault at the time of writing...

Which leads us very neatly into another one of those very *Darksiders* things: loot. Not that the concept of loot is inherently related to the series in some way, especially as this is the first time it's popped up here in this manner. No, we mean how the team at Vigil >





♥ Bosses range from small to rather massive, though it's nothing you haven't seen before.

♥ Shoulders really don't get much broader than in Joe Mad's designs.



♥ Death does pick some wacky places to go on holiday.

> wholeheartedly latched on to a concept used in many other games, plastered it near-verbatim into their game, and just sat back to see how it's received. And, as with the *Zelda* influences, the *Soul Reaver* atmosphere, the *Prince Of Persia* platforming, the *Portal* portalling and whatever other 'liberated' mechanic we could name, it works. It just seems to fit. And it adds that painful, horrible, wonderful feeling of watching a cascading explosion of delicious items flying out of a just-vanquished boss creature, ripe for the nabbing. As if there wasn't already enough content in *Darksiders II* to keep you hopelessly addicted.

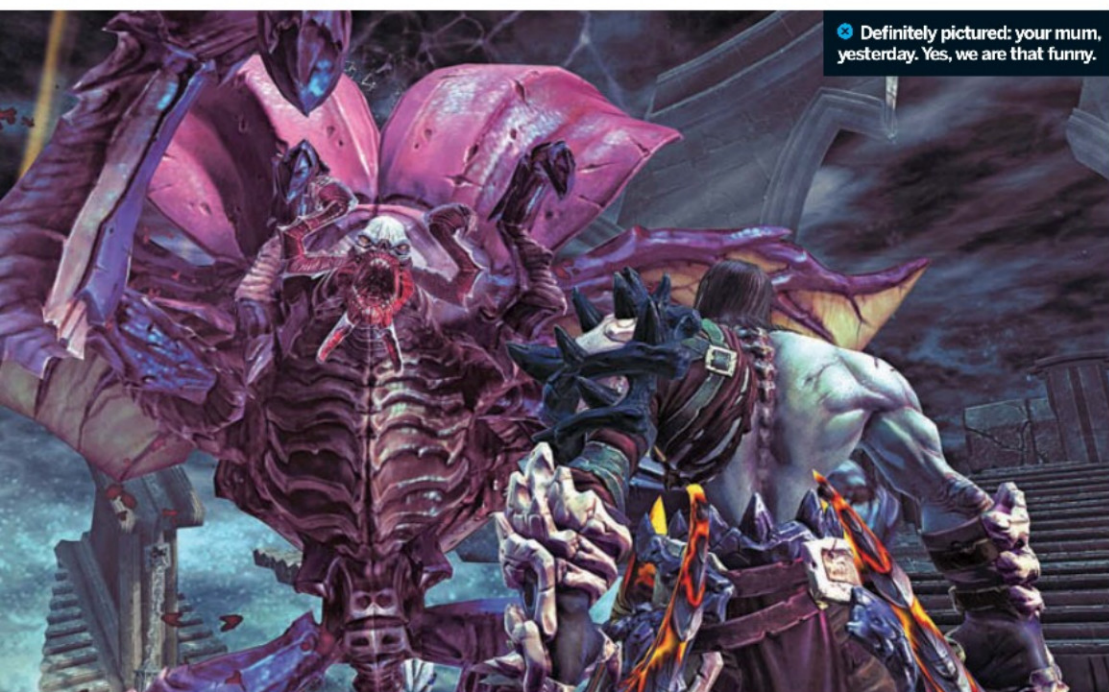
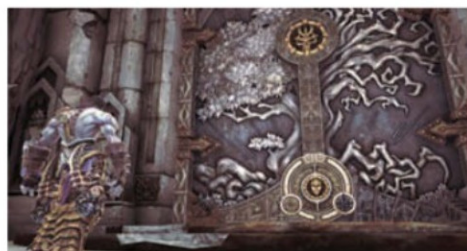
With all this loot comes the need to manage your character throughout the game, and many a time we found ourselves dipping into the inventory screen for an intended minute, only to exit the menu 15 of those planned intervals later. It can be a hard balancing act to wonder just how much resistance it's worth sacrificing for the sake of an added critical

That is both Darksiders II's blessing and its curse: it's a lot of game

strike bonus, but – sorry if we just lost you there; videogames are wonderfully nerdy, in case you forgot – it really adds something more to the mindless treasure hunt that is loot gathering.

That is, you make Death your own. The character, unfortunately, not the very concept of unlif. You can't make the Pale Rider a totally different build, but there's enough customisation – both in levelling up character upgrades and the simple choice between types of items to wear – that you can definitely field a different style of fighter to your friends. We opted for brute strength and a massive hammer, naturally, but you might go for quicker secondary weapons and a more effective magic output. It's not supremely deep, but there's enough to keep your interest, and it's open enough that you can mix it up at a moment's notice.





Definitely pictured: your mum, yesterday. Yes, we are that funny.

And while we're on this roll of relating the end of a paragraph with the beginning of a new one, mixing things up is an area where *Darksiders II* does indeed fall down, in a couple of ways. It's a shame that, for all his differences as a lead character, Death generally plays out exactly the same, from a mechanical perspective, as his more lumbering brother, War. The former climbs faster and is a bit quicker than the latter, sure, but the overall feel of the game is very similar to the last one – it feels like a missed opportunity in some ways; like something more could have been made of the vast difference in style between the Horsemen. Instead it just feels like retreading the same ground, though it is still admittedly fun.

The other mixed-up element is – again, like the first game before it – the way in which *Darksiders II* has an ethos of throwing everything it can into the game and just seeing what works. The third-person shooter section two thirds of the way in is decent enough, sure, but is there any real need for it? None of the

game's many elements are handled badly, per se, but do we really *need* them? It can feel a bit much at times.

And that is both *Darksiders II*'s blessing and its curse: it's a lot of game. It will be too much for some, who simply can't be bothered rooting through the considerable chaff to get to the also substantial wheat. But those who can get in the right frame of mind for an adventure like this are rewarded with an utterly massive, sometimes captivating and always fun game, home to a lot of personality – even if it does still borrow quite liberally from other sources.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

While it's not a huge step up from the original, a break of two and a half years and a bit of polish makes *Darksiders II* easy to recommend. It has issues, but there's a hell of a lot of game for those who want it.

86%

THE CANON CANNON

There's a lorra lorra lore in *Darksiders II*, so here's a quick primer

OLD ONES: Older than angels and demons, Heaven and Hell, and including the Nephilim and Charred Council in their ranks.

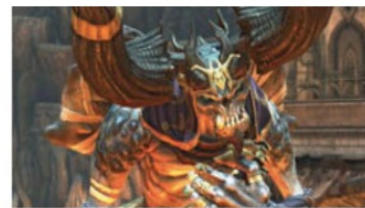
NEPHILIM: A race of Old Ones that battled the Archangels at Paradise and were defeated. The Four Horsemen are the last of their kind.



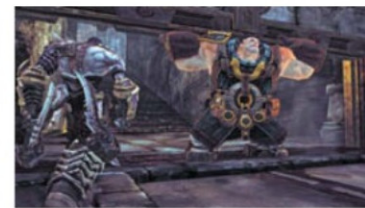
DESPAIR: Trusty steed of Death and available from the very beginning of the game. Another great gaming horse, even if it has no skin.



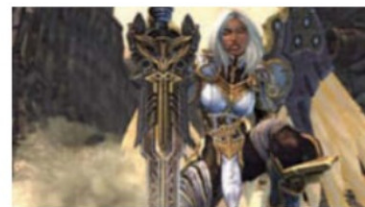
WAR: Protagonist of the first game and youngest of the Horsemen. Wrongly accused of bringing about Armageddon, which has to be annoying.



VULGRIM: Creepy merchant from the first game returning to offer trades of hidden tokens for items, and pages from the Book of the Dead for better items.



MAKERS: For all their importance as the builders of the cities of Heaven and Hell, we just love the fact that these guys are generally Scottish. Also: massive.



ANGELS: Armour-plated war bastards and less Biblical than you might normally think, these warriors love a bit of a scuffle. Especially when they use their holy assault weaponry.



THE CHARRED COUNCIL: Mediators between Heaven and Hell, accusers of War for the crimes he did not commit, and holders of the deepest voices of anything anywhere ever.

STRIFE AND FURY: The remaining Horsemen who, if THQ keeps going this way, might not actually get their own games. Shame*. *Not a Horseman

DEMONS: They're hellspawn and generally evil, as you'd assume, but count the likes of Vulgrim among them, so they're not all bad.



DEATH: Protagonist of *Darksiders II* and eldest of the Horsemen. Looks like Skeletor mixed with Raziel.

DUST: Death's guide and related to the Crowfather in some way. Basically, this is a flying guide for the player.

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The Amazing Spider-Man

Does whatever the common man can



It's easy to let your judgement get the better of you, especially when it comes to superhero games. The Mighty Beenox has presented us with a *Spider-Man* game that allows us to glide through Manhattan Island with gay abandon in the way that only Spider-Man could. It's exhilarating at times, prosaic at others and generally a pleasant experience. But it doesn't make *The Amazing Spider-Man* a good game. Regardless of it being what everybody talks about all the time when it comes to *Spider-Man* games, it isn't the most important factor.

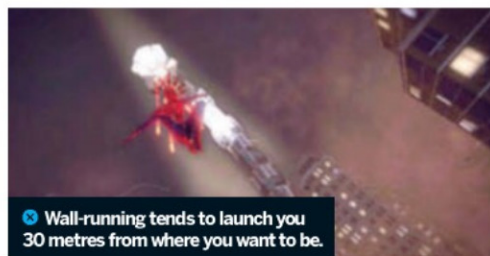
No, the key element is the rest of the game – web-swinging is a factor, no doubt, but when it's backed up by a game that just doesn't feel exciting in any real way, it's a factor that's bludgeoned into irrelevance.

Beenox has taken more than a few cues from Rocksteady's *Batman* games – and this

Beenox has taken more than a few cues from Rocksteady's *Batman* games

is not a bad thing. If you're going to be inspired from somewhere, be inspired by the best. The most obvious source of said inspiration is the combat, which sees Spidey taking on multiple foes at once, easily flowing between each aggressor with punches, kicks, flips and a plethora of lucha libre-inspired manoeuvres. Throw in the spider-sense dodge mechanic, which couldn't be more like *Arkham*'s if it tried, and you have a solid base for a combat system. Unfortunately, this foundation begins to crumble under the weight of a flaky targeting system and a camera that, a lot of the time, just wants to look 'over there'. At no point was the game hard enough to render us a dead spider as a result of its mechanical failings, but that doesn't make the irritation any less... irritating.

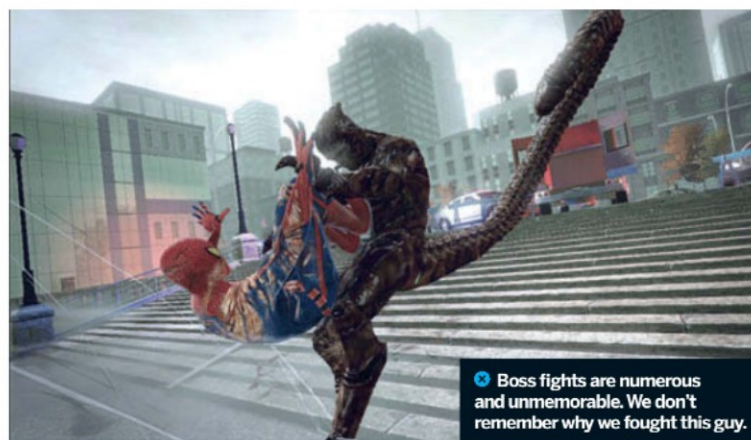
And difficulty is another big point to make: *The Amazing Spider-Man* doesn't offer much of a challenge. Yes, you can up the difficulty, but even then there's nothing that requires true skill. Why is this a bad thing? Because it makes the game boring, of course. And that's a problem that leaks through to other areas: the



Wall-running tends to launch you 30 metres from where you want to be.



Sometimes, sometimes, it looks really quite nice.

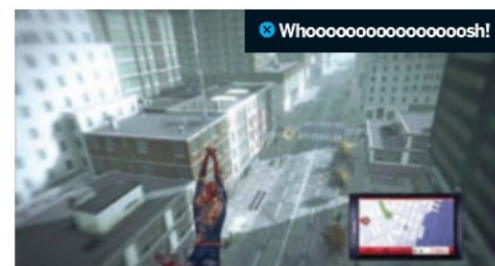


Boss fights are numerous and unmemorable. We don't remember why we fought this guy.



DETAILS

Publisher
Activision
Developer
Beenox
Price
£49.99
Players
1
Genre
Action-adventure
Age Rating
16+
Website
www.theamazing
spidermangame.com
Twitter
@BeenoxTeam
Facebook
facebook.com/
TheAmazingSpider
ManGame



Whoooooooooooooooooooooh!



story is dull, the missions are bland, the action is repetitive and uninspired; even the combat, solid as it is, becomes tiresome quickly.

The Amazing Spider-Man is by no means bad, but it does nothing to elevate it beyond the level of also-ran. And it's nowhere near as good as the *Batman* games it tries to emulate.

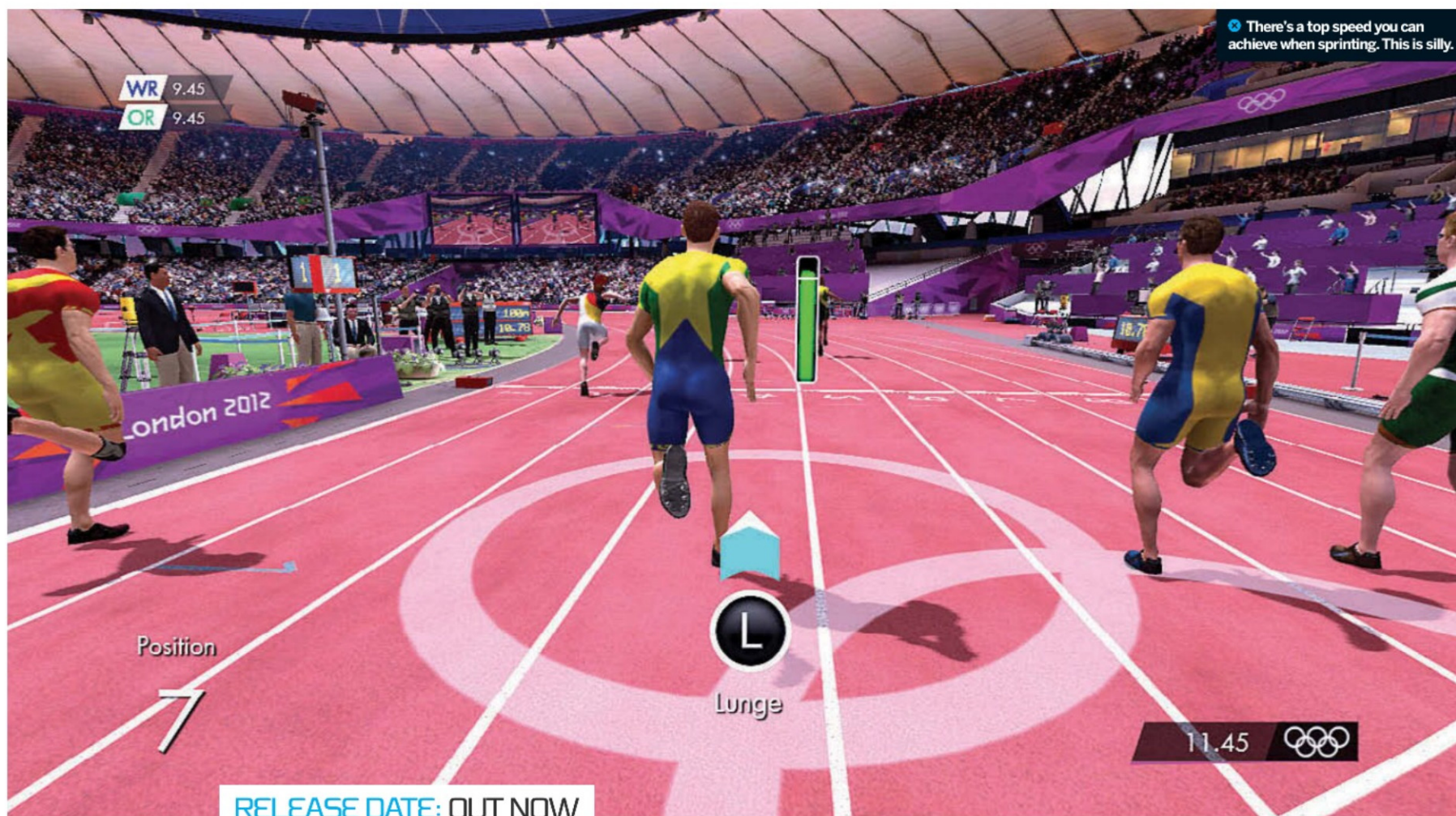
Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

Fun in short blasts and sometimes exhilarating to navigate the city, but *The Amazing Spider-Man* is still washed down the spout by the fact that it's dull. It's just dull. It's not terrible, it's certainly not great, but it could offer a distraction for those finished with *Arkham City*.

61%





DETAILS

Publisher
Sega
Developer
Sega Studios
Australia
Price
£49.99
Players
1-8
Genre
Sports
Age Rating
3+
Website
www.segastudios.com.au
Twitter
@Sega
Facebook
facebook.com/Sega



If the world of *London 2012: The Official Video Game Of The Olympic Games* is to be believed, there are about three different faces in the world, and probably five hairstyles. We live in a world where a selection of just under 50 events is differentiated not by how good they are, but by how non-frustrating they are. According to *London 2012: Why The Subtitle Is This Long We Do Not Know*, we live in a world where an athletics game from 1996, archaic design and all, trumps it in every category that matters.

Recent Olympics and other such athletics releases have seen the shrinking usage of the 'taptaptaptap' technique so favoured by games of this ilk in times gone by. *London 2012: The Joke Wears Thin* takes it another

step forward – no doubt to keep things as family-friendly as possible. Now it's an understandable step, but surely there's a better way to do it than simplifying things so much that there's no skill involved half the time? Tap \otimes a bit, tap the left stick a direction, break a world record. Rinse and repeat.

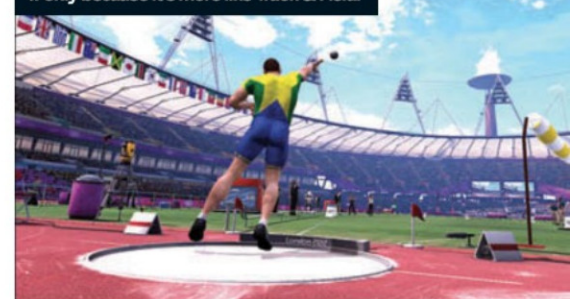
Sure, there's timing involved, and you have to be able to hammer \otimes quickly – sometimes – but anyone with any capability in themselves whatsoever will be able to rinse the game. At least apart from the horrible timing-based events like rowing, or the ridiculous cheating nonsense like cycling, or the seemingly completely random tosh like weightlifting. Or the... don't play it... like beach volleyball.

Sometimes *London 2012: Is It Funny Again Yet?* is enjoyable, but that feeling is so fleeting that you'll wonder why you ever bothered with it. Naturally, getting four people together to play makes for more laughs, and some events like shot put conjure up the feel we had back in the mid-Nineties when we cared about athletics videogames. But the majority of the time, you're left with a boring, soulless husk. We're not casting aspersions on anyone, but it doesn't feel like the game had a long time in development.

Plus – and here's a real irritation – it's impossible to get above a certain speed when running. There's a maximum. If you tap faster, you overexert yourself and slow down. This



There's a top speed you can achieve when sprinting. This is silly.



means there's no longer the opportunity to get six-second world records in the 100-metre sprint. And that's the main reason why *London 2012: This Is The Last Time We'll Do It* fails – it's just not as good as the 16-year-old *International Track & Field*.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

At least it doesn't lie about what it is – this is definitely the officially sanctioned game that represents the Olympic Games in London. Other than that, it's little more than a poor distraction, hardly requiring skill and boring within minutes.

45%





RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Lollipop Chainsaw

Shut up, grass!



DETAILS

Publisher
Warner Bros
Developer
Grasshopper
Manufacture
Price
£39.99
Players
1
Genre
Hack-and-slash
Age Rating
18+
Website
lollipopchainsaw.com
Twitter
@lollipopchainsaw
Facebook
www.facebook.com/
LollipopChainsaw



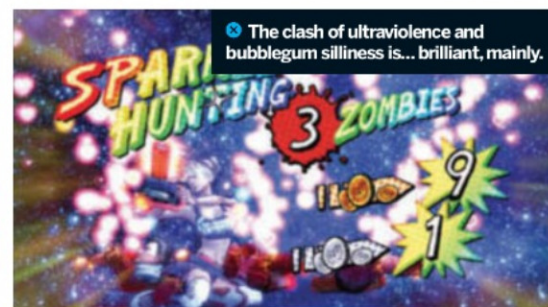
There comes a point where objectivity and common sense has to rule; where the simple fact of the matter has to override any petty little concern like 'feelings'. *Lollipop Chainsaw* is one of those very points: we absolutely adore it, it's funny, it's far more interesting than most other games released this year, and it makes us beam from ear to ear when playing it. So it's a stone cold 95% title, then, right?

We want it to be that. We do. But *Lollipop Chainsaw* just stumbles when it comes to the most important part. That being the game, we mean, and not how well Juliet Starling's buttocks and breasts are modelled. Don't act like you haven't been staring, perv. It suffers from the usual thing that blights so many of Suda51 and Grasshopper Manufacture's games: it's just a bit clunky; it's not as much

fun to play as it should be; it's simply not as good as its competition.

It's impossible to overlook the frankly bizarre decision to seriously limit the number of combos unlocked to the player at the beginning of the game. Pretty much every worthwhile combination attack requires you to spend in-game currency to unlock it, meaning at the game's opening, things feel far more limited than they end up being.

Then there's the actual combat – the meat of the game – which, even after it opens up as more moves are unlocked, still maintains a level of clunkiness that irritates. Pauses at the end of combos, unblockable and unavoidable enemy attacks, and a camera that seems to want to work against the player all come together into something that doesn't feel like it's been thoroughly polished. It's not game-



breaking; it's just something that's been done better by the likes of *Bayonetta*, *Devil May Cry*, *God Of War* and so on. Something that should be done better here.

Though there can be no complaints about the excellent use of music.

So it is that we recommend *Lollipop Chainsaw* with all our hearts: it's stupid, utterly wanton and everything a videogame should be, even with arguments concerning sexism going this way and that. But at the same time we can't help but tell it like it is: *Lollipop Chainsaw* simply isn't a great game, and if you want something slick, technical and with pure, solid mechanics, you're going to feel a bit let down by this. Apart from by the music, because the music is brilliant.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

If you're a Grasshopper or Suda51 fan, add about 45% to this score. From an objective viewpoint, it's a fun but flawed hack-and-slash game with a quirky setting. From a subjective viewpoint, it's bloody brilliant – so much so that you can overlook its clunkier elements.

72%





RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Play the Tanker chapter repeatedly, like the old demo. A much better way to experience MGS2.



DETAILS

Publisher
Konami
Developer
Bluepoint/
Armature Studio
Price
£29.99
Players
1
Genre
Stealth
Age Rating
16+
Website
konami.jp/
kijima_pro/
Twitter
www.facebook.com/
KojimaPro

Metal Gear Solid HD Collection

Just like Vita: looks the same as PS3, yet something's missing

VITA First question: where is *Peace Walker*? Second question: see first question. The *Metal Gear Solid HD Collection* has made its way onto PS Vita, and very lovely it is too, what with all the graphics and the sound and having one of the best games of all time included in the bundle, but unless we're being a bunch of cranky old gits, we'd probably have to reason that calling this a 'collection' is a bit misleading. Two titles isn't a collection, and certainly not when there are about 6,000 other *Metal Gear Solid* games out there that could have been thrown in, including, you know, the original. We could swallow that omission in the PS3 version thanks to *Peace Walker*'s inclusion, but here? Nope.

Sure, there are the two MSX games there as well, but please. Why release a Vita version of a compilation and then hack out one of the games, despite the lower price? Oh, because you want us to pay more for *Peace Walker* on PSN. Right. Dick move, Konami. Dick move.

Moaning aside, let's have a little look at what you do get. First up is *Metal Gear Solid 2*, one of the most anticipated sequels in history and about as close to a *Phantom Menace* moment as this industry has got. Opening Tanker section aside, it's a load of bobbins, which might have come as a surprise at the time, what with reviewers whipping themselves into a frenzy over it and awarding it 9,000%. The fools. The story is rubbish, the environments bland, and the game interrupts you with codec calls so much that you might be convinced that, in fact, your Vita actually is a phone, and Sony just forgot to tell everyone.

Next is *Metal Gear Solid 3*, which is genuinely top-five-of-all-time amazing. A fantastic origin story for the series' antagonist, backed up by a new take on stealth – out of the corridors, into the jungle, we got fun and games. Kojima learned his lesson from *MGS2*, stopped people interrupting you all the time to tell you some irrelevant nonsense, and made it so your battle

was against not only your enemies but also the environment. It's a classic.

Technically, both games look great, and they handle well, even if the touch-screen weapon/item select functionality is a bit clumsy and *MGS* has never had the best controls around.

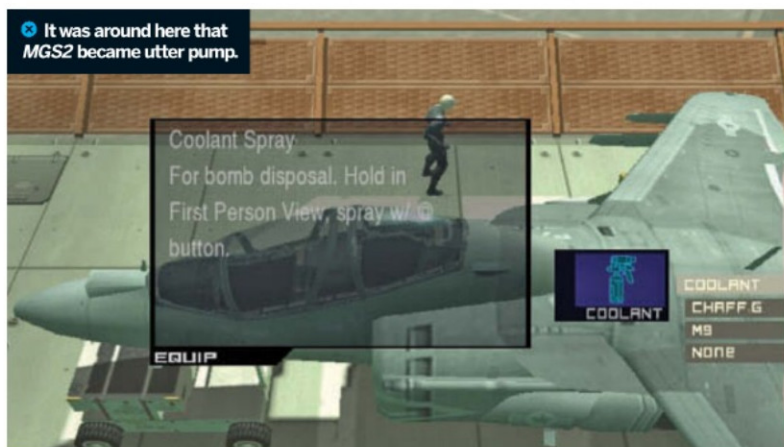
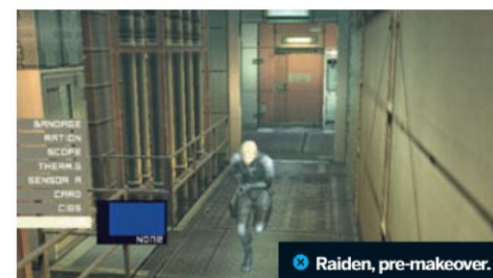
But when it comes down to it, for your cash you get one brilliant game, one poor one, and two titles that came out before you were born, in all probability. As much as we love *Snake Eater*, and as good as the conversions are, this is still not really acceptable.

Steve Burns

VERDICT

Lovingly presented, but when only one of the games in the 'package' is worth playing then you've got a problem, especially at an RRP of £30. Grab it on PS3 if you can, and on Vita when it comes down in price if you must.

70%



XBOX 360

THE UK'S GREATEST INDEPENDENT XBOX 360 MAGAZINE

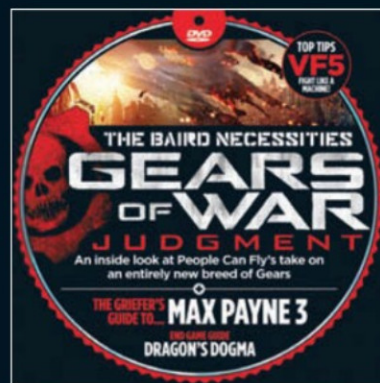
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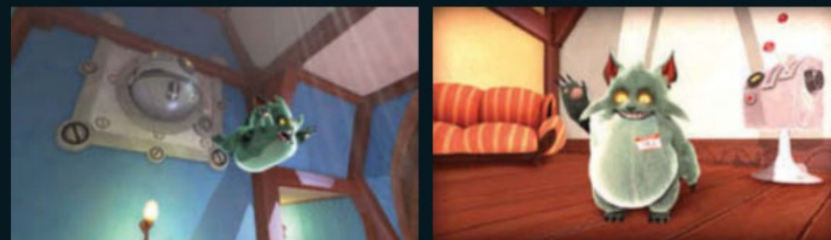
THE WALKING DEAD EPISODE 2

Whatdoldowhatdoldowhatdoldo... Oh god!

Publisher Telltale Games Developer In-house Price £3.99 Players 1 Genre Puzzle

PSN WITHOUT SPOILING THE first episode, the two best things about *Episode 2* is feeling as though your decisions from the original outing mattered – although whichever survivor you have, they play a similar role here – and how the decisions have shifted from ‘save person A or save person B’ to situations where you genuinely don’t know what to do. Explaining would ruin them, but you’ve got the pressure of making decisions quickly with lives at stake. The puzzling is easy and the exploration linear, but for the raw, skittish tension of the decisions you make? *The Walking Dead* is unmatched.

90%



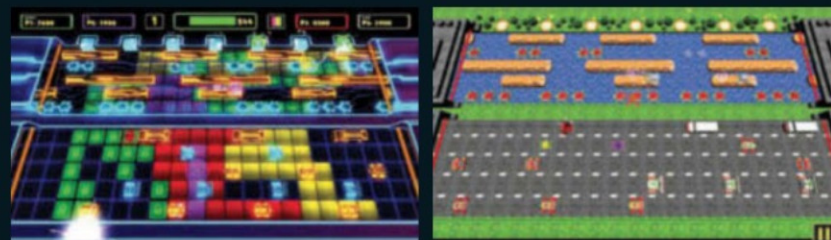
QUANTUM CONUNDRUM

We’re not stupid, honest

Publisher Square Enix Developer Airtight Games Price £8.79 Players 1 Genre Puzzle

PSN ENTER ROOM, STARE at room, scratch head, push buttons, throw boxes, have tantrum. That’s both the way we start our day at work and how we played *Portal*. Similarly, and unsurprisingly given that *Portal*’s Kim Swift led this title too, *Quantum Conundrum* inspires those same feelings. Physics-based puzzles through an FPS viewing glass but with the ability to alter the world you’re in by reversing time, making everything light and so on, rather than slinging portals around. It’s brilliant. Tight design that’s full of character and nod-your-head-in-approval moments. We love this.

90%



FROGGER: HYPER ARCADE EDITION

Ultimate Super Frogger Turbo Plus

Publisher Konami Developer In-house Price £8.99 Players 1-4 Genre Retro

PSN IF YOU ASKED us how we’d update *Frogger* for the modern gamer, we’d pretend to think about it for a few seconds out of politeness, say ‘dunno’ and then go back to whatever it was we were doing before. So credit where it’s due: Konami has found lots of ways to reinvent the ancient, creaky wheel – *Tile Capture*, *Battle Royale*, *Freak Out* modes and so on, along with *Castlevania* skins and the like. Shame, then, that none of the modes are gripping in the same way *Pac-Man: Championship Edition* was. Besides gimmicks, the core *Frogger* gameplay is untouched and thus lacks compelling high-score chases.

55%



Drivers look weirdly calm during moments like this.



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

It’s a car quickly turning left. Say what you see!

Test Drive: Ferrari Racing Legends

You didn’t know this existed, did you?



PS3

Publisher Namco Bandai Developer Slightly Mad Studios Price £TBC Players 1-8 Genre Racing Age Rating 3+ Website www.atari.com/FerrariRacingLegends Twitter @namcobandai Facebook www.facebook.com/NamcoBandai

When *Ferrari Legends* turned up, completely unannounced, mass hysteria broke out. What was this game? Where had it come from? Who had sent it? Was it a warning of some kind? No, of course not. It was just an under-the-radar racing game. Phew.

Despite the negative connotations of sneaking into the office like an invisible Solid Snake, *Ferrari* isn’t bad. It’s more than passable, in a lot of ways, being a goldmine of historical racing for those in love with the prancing horse – not like that, you savages. The campaign mode is the highlight, divided into three eras covering the history of the company, from the earliest model to modern supercars. Players will work their way up through the firm, going from test driver to F1 star.

The handling model is forgiving, enabling players to throw the back end out in true *OutRun* fashion within seconds of play, and those who want a bit more authenticity can turn the

driving aids off and try not to turn their new toys into mangled dreams. It’s an enjoyable game, no doubt, but the bottom line is that if you’re anything other than a total and utter Ferrari nut you’re probably better off with *Gran Turismo*. If you love Ferrari more than life itself, though, get stuck in.

Steve Burns



VERDICT

A nice little package for those in love with the brand and its heritage, but there are better alternatives out there for pretty much everybody else. No *Gran Turismo* beater, but not a waste of time either.

60%



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Lego Batman 2: DC Super Heroes

Travelling an open-world Tale

PS3

You'd be forgiven for assuming *Lego Batman 2: DC Super Heroes* is more of the same from Traveller's Tales – the Lego studio. Co-operative *Lego* action, either two-player or with AI and the ability to switch who you're controlling, with some smashing things up and solving simple puzzles until you've either finished it or are bored of collecting Lego studs.

You might turn it off and move on to something else, already bored of something you've seen done many times in the past. Which would be fair enough, we suppose, but if you just hold out until you get in the Batmobile, you'll see why *DC Super Heroes* is a return to form for a format that had become somewhat stale in recent years.

It's not huge and it's not comparable to *GTA IV*, but it's open-world. Controlling Batman, Robin, Superman and about 50 other characters as you run, smash, repair, use different powers and generally muck about is good, solid fun.

In any other game it would be fair to gloss over the voice acting, maybe pointing out that Nolan North is involved, making a pithy comment and moving on. But it's fair to take some time to highlight the VO work in *DC*



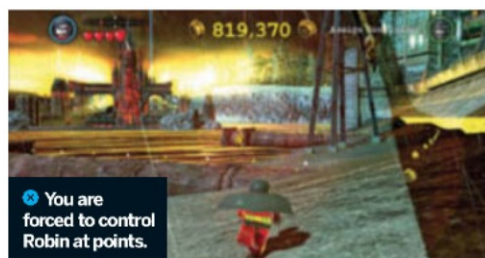
DETAILS

Publisher
Warner Bros
Developer
Traveller's Tales
Price
£39.99
Players
1-2
Genre
Action-adventure
Age Rating
7+
Website
www.ttgames.com
Twitter
@TTGames
Facebook
www.facebook.com/LEGOBATMAN2
DCHEROES

Super Heroes, as it's the first time Traveller's Tales has used vocal talent in a *Lego* game. And yes, unsurprisingly, one such voice actor is Nolan North.

It's actually pretty solid, with Batman bridging the gap between Bale and West admirably, Superman sounding... well, like Superman should, and, even though it's not Mark Hamill, the Joker is on top form. Plus Clancy Brown appears as Lex Luthor, and **Play** loves Clancy Brown.

So it's a game that has spread its wings somewhat and taken a few risks, including an open world as it does. It's imperfect, it doesn't feel much like a living city so much as a Lego playground – probably no bad thing – and it can be pernickety and inaccurate at times. But, generally speaking, on a technical level it's good.



You are forced to control Robin at points.



To the Batcementmixer!

If you have no interest in playing a rather simple game that involves a lot of collecting studs, you're not going to be impressed. On the other hand, if you're ten years old, a parent or a person with a soul, you'll find a lot to enjoy in *Lego Batman 2*. We're happy with it, we're impressed with the route the developer has taken, and we're going to go now and play some more.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

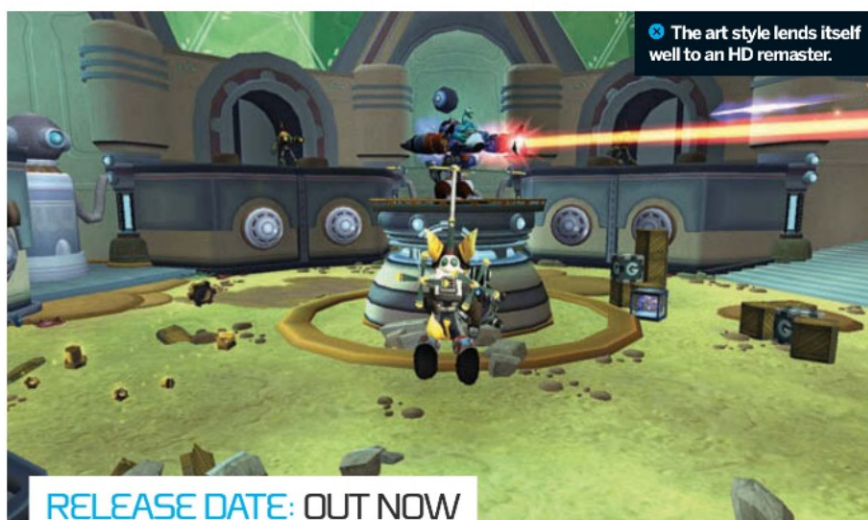
Doesn't fix all the problems of the *Lego* games in one fell swoop, but adds enough of interest to make it relevant again. There's so much heart put into the game that it's pretty impossible to dislike, actually, warts and all.

80%



The city is impressive, and surprisingly large at points.





RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The Ratchet & Clank Trilogy: Classics HD

Smash all the things (in HD)



PS3 Publisher Sony Computer Entertainment Developer Insomniac Price £34.99 Players 1-8 Genre Platform Age Rating 7+ Website uk.playstation.com/ratchettrilogy/ Twitter @insomniacgames Facebook facebook.com/insomniacgames

We feel the *Ratchet & Clank* series gets a bit of a rough ride with gamers, being derided as 'sub-Mario' or whatever other nonsense they want to throw out. Fact of the matter is – and we've decided it's fact, not opinion – the series is brilliant. The first three games get progressively better and stand up to this day as superb examples of what can be done with the platform genre when you put guns in it. No, really.

How do we know this? Well, the title of this review might have given it away: *The Ratchet & Clank Trilogy* is here, and it's yet another example of Sony picking its best and brightest to add some delicious polish and throw out to us at a reduced price. All three look excellent in 1080p and, barring flat textures here and there, could well pass for a current-gen game.

But that matters for little if they don't play well, and oh! Would you believe it? They all play fantastically, feeling just as fresh as they did when they came out the first time around.

There's the odd duff section and there's not a huge amount of variety through the three games. But so what? It's a brilliant collection, well worth your money. Lovely stuff.

Ian Dransfield

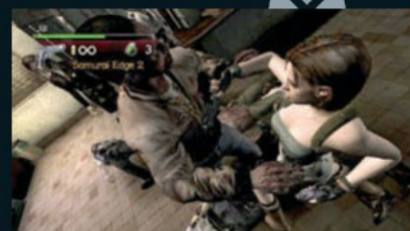
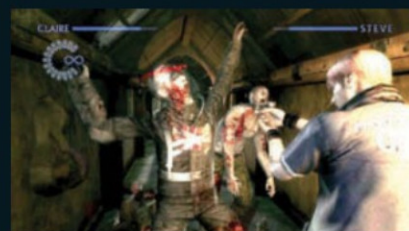
VERDICT

Just as the PS3 iterations are great, the PS2 games still impress. *The Ratchet & Clank Trilogy* looks and plays fantastically, rolling back the years and reminding us that smashing crap up with a wrench will never not be fun.

88%



PSN reviews



RESIDENT EVIL CHRONICLES HD COLLECTION

A bundle of remakes of remakes

Publisher Capcom Developer In-house Price £21.99 Players 1-2 Genre On-rails shooter



FINALLY ARRIVING ON PS3 after having resided like a resident on the vastly inferior and stupid and smelly Wii for a long time, *Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles* and *The Darkside Chronicles* can be had at a snip for just over £20. Both games are good, solid on-rails shooters, playable with either the pad or preferably with Move.

The Umbrella Chronicles follows the events of *Resi Zero*, the original and *Resi 3*, and is a fair bit of fun. *The Darkside Chronicles*, however, is where Capcom finds its stride, taking in *Resi 2* and *Code: Veronica* in a far more balanced, exciting and fun way. Recommended.

82%



RAINBOW MOON

Getting what you pay for

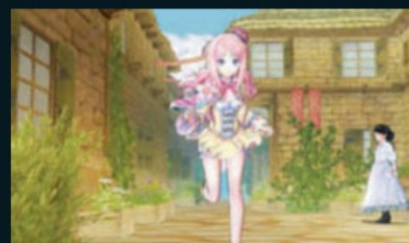
Publisher SideQuest Developer eastasiasoft Price £9.99 Players 1 Genre Strategy



A STRATEGIC RPG with a great deal of depth and a huge amount of stuff to do for dozens of hours, all for under a tenner? We must be in heaven. Except this heaven is a bit wrong, and we're left feeling slightly let down by it.

Aside from the fact that you're made to excessively grind to be able to make any progress, which will annoy you unless you're a masochist, there's the way the battle system just isn't as balanced as we would hope. You can block routes off with loot, and most battles descend into simply turtling into a corner, playing the boring, easy route. A shame, as it's otherwise solid.

68%



ATELIER MERURU: THE APPRENTICE OF ARLAND

We feel dirty now...

Publisher Gust Developer NIS America Price £39.99 Players 1 Genre RPG



REGARDLESS OF A game offering a robust and interesting alchemy system that can drag you in and keep you playing for hours if you're of the right mindset, *Atelier Meruru* is boring. Not only is it boring, but it's dodgy as hell – this is a game rated 12+ because of suggestive elements involving a cast fronted by a 14-year-old girl. When you're made to feel uncomfortable simply playing something for review in the office, it puts all the criticisms you already have of a game under the microscope, to say the least. A boring RPG is one thing. A boring RPG with 'sexy' 14-year-olds can just go away, thanks.

35%



141

CO-OPERATIVE TROPHIES



Beg, borrow or steal the help of your friends and you can bag a straightforward haul of 141 Trophies. It might involve boosting, it might involve simply playing a lot, but it all results in more shinies for your virtual cabinet

WWE ALL STARS

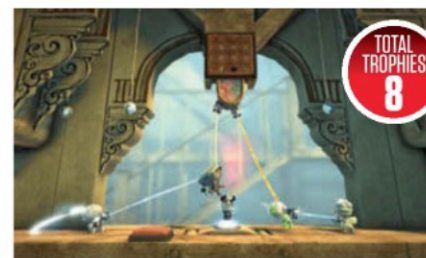
0 3 0 0 4



These seven Trophies ('In The Spotlight', 'Winner By Default', 'Enhancement Talent', 'Mid Carder', 'Main Eventer', 'You Can't See Me!' and 'The New Fact Of Cyberspace') all come through online play, and can all be done by simply taking on a friend who allows you to win the requisite number of times, which amounts to ten in succession, 50 overall and at least one with a created superstar against your opponent's own creation – oh, and they have to get themselves disqualified. There are even a couple of golds thrown in there, as if this batch wasn't already insultingly easy. Which is nice.



TOTAL TROPHIES 7



TOTAL TROPHIES 8

LITTLEBIGPLANET/LBP2

0 0 0 0 8



Four Trophies from each iteration of *LittleBigPlanet* are available pretty simply for those with friends or just the ability to play online. For the original, bag 'Friendly', 'Party Person' and 'Top Of The Class' by playing a four-player level with people on your friends list, with them allowing you to finish in first place. Then bag 'Socialite' by just playing with three not on your list – temporarily unfriend people, maybe? The second game gives you the chance to get 'Dive In 25' by playing 25 levels with your friends, '25 Online Versus Wins' by... well, doing that, 'Grapple Hooked' by getting four friends together and chaining yourselves as one and 'Turbo Slapper' – obviously the most fun – by hitting at least two of your chums at once.



TOTAL TROPHIES 29

WARHAWK

0 0 0 0 29



Rather than list all 29 of the Trophies you can unlock easily by using the help of your friends, it's easier to just suggest you play the game in either split-screen local multiplayer, one-on-one, or set up private matches against a willing chum who's out to help you and be helped in return. As the whole game is multiplayer, you're expected to be playing with or against others, meaning *Warhawk* is ripe for boosting. You will need ten willing parties to bag the 'Warlord' clan Trophy, but other than that they're all pretty straightforward, if not all super-quick.



TOTAL TROPHIES 4

JOURNEY

0 0 0 2 2



Bringing the attainable number right back down to a sedate four but upping the silver haul to two comes *Journey*'s co-op Trophies. There's no solid way of making sure you end up partnering with a friend, but you can arrange out of the game to begin at a certain time on a certain day and fate should take hold of the rest, allowing you to nab 'Crossing', 'Companion' and 'Reflection' in one sitting. 'Wonder', on the other hand, just requires some committed online play – you will encounter ten different players eventually, so unlocking that one is a matter of time.

BORDERLANDS

0 1 1 3



As with many games on this list, a lot of Trophies are achievable by playing alone. However, the likes of *Borderlands* do have dedicated co-op Trophies that can be bagged by playing together like nice little kids or by boosting like nasty little buggers. 'Duel-icious' and 'Duelinator', for example, can be bagged by having a single duel and your opponent allowing you to win. 'Group LF Header', 'There's No "I" In Team' and 'United We Stand' are simple enough, though, and just require the game to be played through like normal, just so long as it's with other players. They might take a while, though, so enjoy the ride.

TOTAL TROPHIES 5



✓ BORDERLANDS: Win a duel for an easy, quick Trophy.



✓ THE BEATLES: ROCK BAND: A unison bonus is all you need. That and love.



TOTAL TROPHIES 5

THE BEATLES: ROCK BAND

0 0 1 4



A few different combinations with chums are required for mostly easy Trophies and a few less easy ones. 'A Little Help From My Friends' just needs you to have three others playing the game and start the story, while 'All Together Now' needs you to bag a unison bonus playing with others. The other two easy Trophies are 'She Still Sings It With The Band' and the inevitable 'Don't Let Me Down', both of which will be picked up in standard play. The more difficult ones come in the form of 'All The Children Sing', which rather than being insanely hard is just a bit of legwork, requiring all the triple Fab ratings for triple harmonies in every song with them included.



✓ MARVEL ULTIMATE ALLIANCE 2: Ten fusion powers nabs you the award.



✓ SYNDICATE: Get four players together for a Trophy.

MARVEL ULTIMATE ALLIANCE 2

0 0 0 5



Ultimate Alliance 2 is one of those games that's a bit cruddy, but that perks up a great deal when played with others. Handy for Trophies like 'Rookie Squad', 'Experienced Allies' and 'Decorated Veterans', which simply require you to play through a total of 24 maps with other players. Another straightforward one is 'Sim Team-Up', which is earned by completing a mission in the mission simulator and exiting back to the simulator menu. The only vaguely difficult Trophy is 'Heroes Unite', which requires ten Fusion moves to be performed, which you'll likely do anyway while playing through the 24 maps.



TOTAL TROPHIES 5



TOTAL TROPHIES 4

SYNDICATE

0 0 0 4

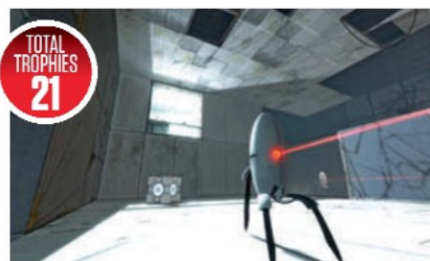


The main campaign for *Syndicate* has its own Trophies, and while there is some bleed-through into multiplayer, it's generally two separate endeavours. But there are four Trophies that it's pretty simple to bag if you have three willing friends helping you and the time, patience and ability to do so. Just get your team of four together to net 'Initial Public Offering', then play through the game, allowing one team-mate to get stunned by an electron mace before saving them to grab 'Mace Ace'. Then just go on to finish all of the maps on expert to bag both 'Initiation Complete' and 'High Value Asset'. Not necessarily easy, but definitely simple.

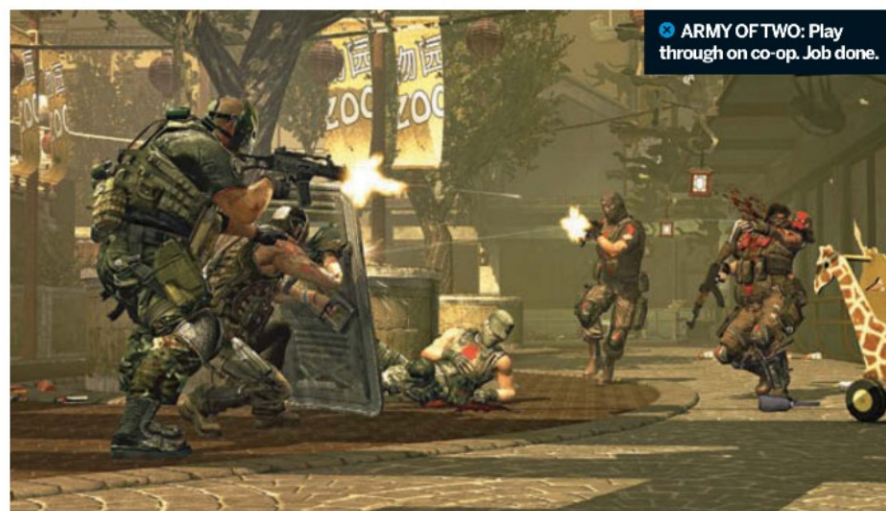
PORTAL 2

0 2 3 16

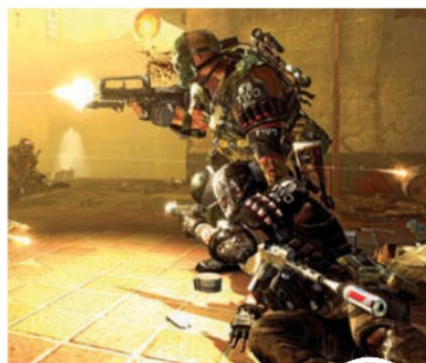
This has at least 21 Trophies for those playing together – unsurprising, with its focus on multiplayer. While the majority are unlocked simply by playing through co-op – completing courses, not dropping cubes ('Iron Grip') and gesturing ('Gesticul-8', 'Can't Touch This', 'Empty Gesture') – there are more complex deeds necessary. 'Narbacular Drop' requires a bit of communication and timing, but is easy enough. 'Professor Portal' requires completion of the co-op courses before starting again with another player who has never played *Portal 2* before. Or maybe just someone who has created a new profile with no saves on it. Finally, 'Friends With Benefits' tasks you with playing co-op with three different people and hugging them – so do that. It's for science. And a silver.



PORTAL 2: The co-op Trophies here are fun to nab.



ARMY OF TWO: Play through on co-op. Job done.



ARMY OF TWO: THE 40TH DAY

0 0 0 6

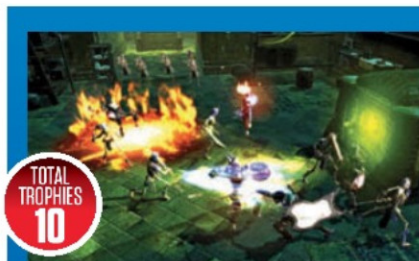
There are six co-op dedicated Trophies on *Army Of Two: The 40th Day*, and none of them are difficult to achieve in the slightest. 'Healer', 'Co-Op Sniper', 'Attention Grabber' and 'In Synch' can all be bagged just by playing through the game, or by specifically playing for them over a single level. 'The Optimist' and 'The Pessimist' require you to reach a point in the game – and there are a few, usually at the end of missions – where you make a decision: both make negative choices on one, positive on another and there's another two Trophies for your collection.

TOTAL TROPHIES 6

DUNGEON SIEGE III: The co-op Trophies take a lot of time.



BURNOUT PARADISE: All quite easy to unlock.



DUNGEON SIEGE III

0 0 3 7

This game's focus on co-op means it has a host of co-op Trophies – ten, in actual fact. None of them are genuinely difficult and more just time sinks, requiring repeated dialogue actions ('Of One Mind', 'Rivalry', 'Jinx', 'Military Intelligence'), playing through and completing the game ('Party Of Four', 'Fellowship Of The Ding', 'Nerds Hate Sunlight') and then a few more specific ones, like requiring a couple of different character setups and beating a boss ('Maximum Bro Fist', 'Two Girls, One Boss') and joining another player's game and offering, well, the name of the Trophy ('Helping Hand') by using an empowered defensive ability. Simple, but again not quick.



BURNOUT PARADISE

0 0 0 4

The most recent *Burnout* is great fun to play alone and excellent fun in multiplayer, bringing together a lot of the elements that Criterion went on to include in its Autolog system. But that's not important right now. What is important is getting together seven friends to meet in the Wildcats' stadium to blag the Trophy of a similar name. To do that, you might as well invite a friend to join you, which earns another Trophy, and jump over a friend on your way there to get the bronze of almost that name. Finally, once you're done having fun and so long as you have a PlayStation Eye, send a chum a shot of yourself to bag the 'Send A Mugshot Or Smugshot' bronze.

Trophies Guide

EA SPORTS MMA

0 0 0 0 14



You can pick up a fair few bronze Trophies on EA's sorely overlooked brawler quite easily, especially if you're willing to forego the traditional single-player route to getting them. Either connect two pads or find a willing online sparring partner to bag 14 bronzes in the shape of 'Ultimate Fight Card', 'Brotherly Love', 'Dream Backpack', 'Rock Out With Your Knockout', 'Say Uncle', 'Disarmed!', 'Rocky Choke', 'It's A Knock Out Technically', 'Beat The Clock', 'Foot Fight', 'Hands Of Stone', 'I'm Rubber You're Glue', 'Denied!' and 'Blood Transfusion'. It might take a fair few fights to get them all, but it's straightforward and very easy when boosting.



TOTAL TROPHIES 14

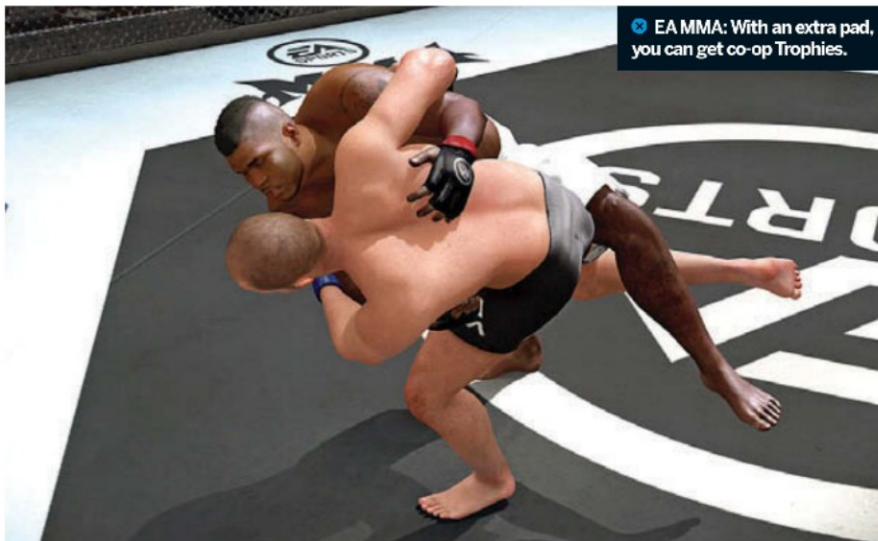


GUITAR HERO 5

0 0 0 0 8



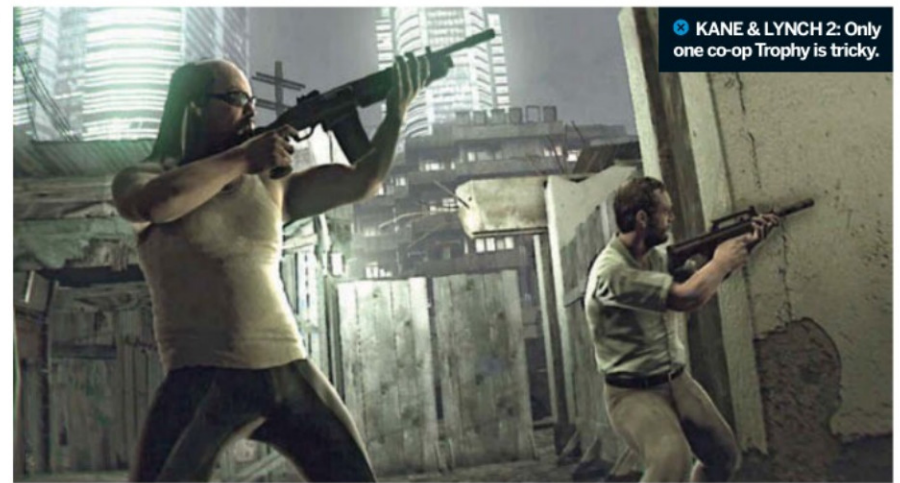
Four Trophies require four players to be on more than just the same wavelength, with 'All Four Bass Are Belong To Us', 'Barbershop', 'Drumline' and 'String Quartet' all asking you play four-player with the same instrument. During one of these matches, all four players should activate Star Power at the same time for 'Our Powers Combined' for another bronze. Then set up an eight-player match, everyone playing the same instrument, and finish it to grab both 'Ménage à Huit' and 'Rocktopus'. Finally, play 25 pro face-off matches to bag 'Outgoing' and you've got them.



EA MMA: With an extra pad, you can get co-op Trophies.



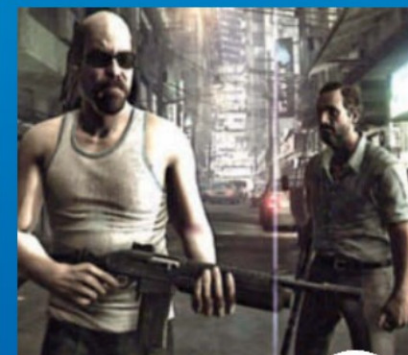
GUITAR HERO 5: Finding four players is the tricky part.



KANE & LYNCH 2: Only one co-op Trophy is tricky.



DEAD ISLAND: Easiest co-op Trophies here? Yup.



KANE & LYNCH 2: DOG DAYS

0 0 1 4

TOTAL TROPHIES 5

While Kane & Lynch 2 has a huge focus on co-op, there are only a few dedicated Trophies. Still, with five easily baggable and the game being as short as it is, it isn't out of the question to grab them. Four can be picked up in a single playthrough ('A Little Help From A Friend', 'No Going Back', 'End Of The Road' and 'Got Your Back'), while 'Giving A Hand' requires more work. You can scam it by finding a perfect spot to stand, taking down enemies and reloading checkpoints, but that's a bit laborious. Better to play through, encouraging getting into down not dead situations.

DEAD ISLAND

0 0 0 0 6



Another co-op-focused game that only has a few Trophies that require other people. So here are six of them. Some are insultingly simple, like 'Need A Hand' requiring you to join a game. Some need three friends to play along, like 'Ménage à Trois' – even better if each player is a different character, which also drops 'Originality'. Keep on playing together to bag 'Together Into The Light', and complete some quests as a team to get 'Going Steady'. Finally, you'll need to drop at least an hour into playing with ten different people to snag 'People Person' – simple, but a bit of a tiresome exercise if it's all you're working towards.



TOTAL TROPHIES 6

TOTAL TROPHIES 141

THE 12 BEST MINIS

Sony hasn't forgotten about its minis, and nor should you. Here are 12 very good reasons why



01 VELOCITY

DEVELOPER: FUTURLAB
PRICE: £3.99

Velocity is everything a PS mini should be. It's something you wouldn't see released in any other form on PlayStation; it's simple enough to instantly pick up and play; it's inventive and creative in ways full-price games dare not be; it's got brilliant music that reminds us of the past. Basically, *Velocity* is one of the best games released this year.

The premise is simple, seeing players flying a ship up a vertical tunnel, avoiding obstacles and rescuing survivors. But then the unique elements come in, allowing players to speed up their rate of travel for more points, teleport around the screen and through obstacles to add a layer of quick-thinking strategy, and drop telepods at any point to warp back to earlier sections of the stage to tackle an area that was initially locked off, for example. There may be a lot of elements to juggle, but it's not as confusing as it sounds. In fact, it's great. *Velocity*, you are the reigning monarch of the minis.



03 WHERE IS MY HEART?

DEVELOPER: SCHULENBURG SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT
PRICE: £3.99

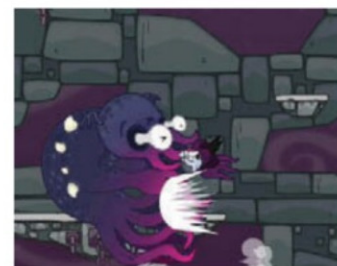
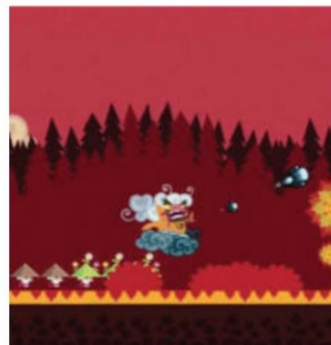
The jumbled comic book panels of *Where Is My Heart?* caught the... well, heart, of many a critic and player with its beautiful aesthetic and general feel of being 'one of dem arty games innit'. Don't hold that against it, though. Just because loads of people got their Tommy Tank hats on for *WIMH*, it doesn't mean it's overrated tripe.

No, it's actually an intelligent puzzle-platformer, relying on clever use of your spatial awareness and employing your multiple characters in useful ways that don't get them falling down the nearest spike pit. It's clumsy to explain, but it's wonderful to play.

04 FLOATING CLOUD GOD SAVES THE PILGRIMS

DEVELOPER: DAKKO DAKKO
PRICE: £2.49

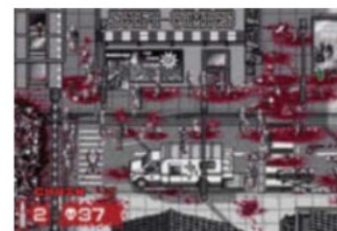
A scrolling shooter? Isn't that boring and super lame? Well, yes – but not in this case. If it was both of those things, why would it be so high on our best minis list, hmm? Our poor, confused reader: this is more than just shooting – it's protecting pilgrims, it's raining down fury, it's carefully and strategically collecting hearts from your followers to power yourself up. Basically, it's taking an established formula and – you guessed it – doing something unique with it, making it more fun in the process.



02 MONSTERS (PROBABLY) STOLE MY PRINCESS

DEVELOPER: MEDIATRONIC
PRICE: £3.49

While some of you may get this confused with the *Badman/My Lord* series, you are fools – and we definitely didn't do that. No, this is a platformer starring The Duke, on a quest to rescue the titular princess – yes, that's it. But as with most of the great games on this list, it takes a standard gaming trope and modernises it, making it something special. See, you're heading vertically, trying to defeat the monsters who (probably) stole the princess. Each platform you land on adds to your multiplier, leading to higher combo scores. Land on a platform you've already used and the counter is reset. Simple, short and captivating – just how it should be.



05 OMG-Z!

DEVELOPER: LAUGHING JACKAL
PRICE: £2.49

There could have been more zombie games on this list, but there are only two. And while both involve you shooting at the undead, *OMG-Z!* presents it in such a way that you don't care about it following gaming's most overdone trope. Because, yes, you're shooting, but you're planning; you're working with limited ammo; you're trying to set off the best chain reaction among the zombies that you can. It's a puzzle game, you see, and it's an absolutely excellent one at that.

12 Best minis



06 MIGHTY FLIP CHAMPS! DX

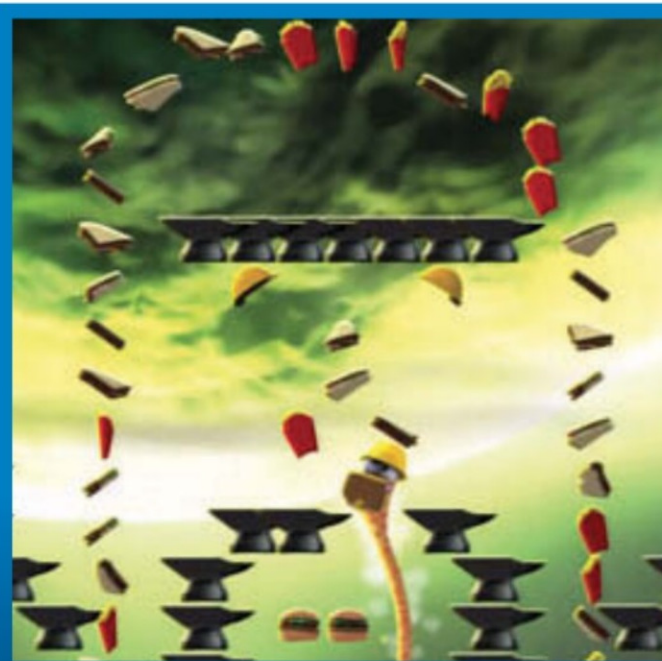
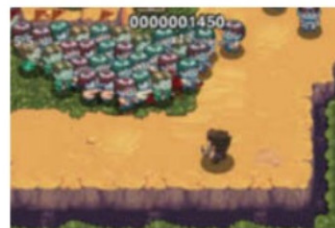
DEVELOPER: WAYFORWARD TECHNOLOGIES
PRICE: \$5.99
 (NOT AVAILABLE ON EU STORE)

We would attempt to describe the action in *Mighty Flip Champs! DX*, but it's made our brains melt a bit just thinking about it. So instead we'll just sit in quiet contemplation, sending you psychic messages compelling you to get a US PSN account and download the game. It's a space-shifting puzzle-platformer, it's really interesting, it works exceptionally well, and it breaks your brain a fair bit. As such, it's one of the best minis out there.

07 AGE OF ZOMBIES

DEVELOPER: HALFBRICK STUDIOS
PRICE: £3.99

We've tried to avoid too many games that also appear on iOS/Android, but some just have to be in here – like Halfbrick's *Age Of Zombies*. Admittedly it would be *Jetpack Joyride* if it were available as a mini, but instead we're left with a really rather good shooter, seeing our hero Barry fending off thousands of the undead with a variety of weapons. It's the encouragement to be daring and actually use different weapons that makes AOZ interesting, and it's damn good fun to play too.



08 HUNGRY GIRAFFE

DEVELOPER: LAUGHING JACKAL
PRICE: £2.49

Imagine a world where the neck of a giraffe, after the animal itself consumed a great deal of fruit and fast food, grew to hundreds of thousands of metres. Stupid and quite frightening, yes? Naturally. Also: brilliant. *Hungry Giraffe* is an obstacle-avoiding game of skill – eat to propel your neck to greater length, don't hit the anvils, try to avoid the poisons and pills that mess up your progress. It's simple and captivating, and we don't know why it isn't trumpeted more by the unwashed masses.

09 AERO RACER

DEVELOPER: HALFBRICK STUDIOS
PRICE: £3.99

It's a racing game but oh so much more. *Aero Racer* offers a standard selection of fun little races on top of a few other modes, like that one where you have to 'tag' the opponent a few times to win, and it's really annoying because of the momentum-based movement. You think you're not going to be able to do it and then oh, you did it and now you're having fun because *Aero Racer* is really good.



10 WHO'S THAT FLYING?!

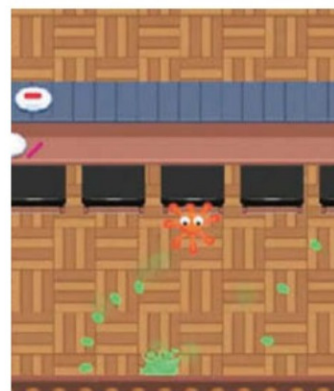
DEVELOPER: MEDIATRONIC
PRICE: £3.99

We almost completely ignored this one based on how much was made of its title, presented as *WTF?!*. Do you see? It's like that internet swearing/surprise thing. Hilarious! Anyway, we did play it – we are, after all, professionals – and we're glad we did. It's a scrolling shooter with elements of tower defence thrown in for good measure: kill all the enemies, don't let any past you. Let too many past, you lose. And you know what? It's good enough to be on this very list.

11 THE 2D ADVENTURES OF ROTATING OCTOPUS CHARACTER

DEVELOPER: DAKKO DAKKO
PRICE: £1.74

The name and the look of the game might well put you off, if you're one of those judgemental types. But, as with so many on this list, it's not worth the trouble of obeying your base reactions – *Octo*, as we're going to call it, is brilliant. The game sees players controlling the titular octopus, changing direction, jumping, picking up octopods and generally attempting to not die. Guess what it is. Go on, guess. Yep, it's great.



12 NOM NATION

DEVELOPER: PLAYERTHREE
PRICE: £1.74

Edutainment is a stupid word, but in the case of *Nom Nation* it actually provides something that makes you overlook how utterly stupid a fake word it is. See, this is a puzzle-platformer – there's a fair few of those on the list – that covers dietary habits and tries to educate the player on what you should eat for different reasons. Protein: strength. Hunger: healthy stuff. Other stuff: other stuff. It's a difficult balance, but it's actually done well – and if you're as thick and fat as most people in this office, you'll learn something too.

TOP TEN PSN RETRO



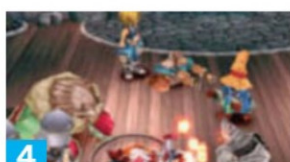
1 Metal Gear Solid



2 Resident Evil 2



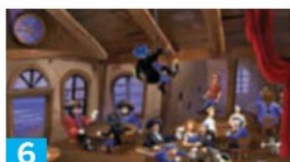
3 God Hand



4 Final Fantasy IX



5 Streets Of Rage 2



6 The Secret Of Monkey Island



7 Driver



8 Final Fight: Double Impact



9 Sonic The Hedgehog 2



10 Crash Bandicoot

RETRO ON PSN... They're old but are they any good?



You can see how this screamed 'FPS reboot', can't you?

Syndicate Wars

• Release date July 1997/November 2008 (PSN) • Publisher EA • Developer Bullfrog Productions
• Games it influenced Red Faction series, Mercenaries series



SYNDICATE WARS

WASN'T a welcoming game, and without the luxury of a manual

on the PSN version it's even less likely to be understood by newcomers. It was an absolute bummer to control, with inputs that required you to memorise some truly ridiculous combinations to do anything – and up to get in a car, something ludicrous involving down and left to select a weapon for everyone – but those who persisted and who could be bothered were rewarded well. *Syndicate Wars* was dripping with atmosphere, and even now can absorb you in certain ways, as long as you ignore the fact that you're staring at barely recognisable blobs waddling about something that's apparently a futuristic city, blowing the crap out of everyone and everything.

Okay, so it was stripped down from the PC version in a few ways – no research, no choosing your next mission, lower-res graphics, those controls – but it didn't really matter, and PlayStation got it and Saturn didn't, so suck it, Sega dweebs.

Ahem.

But the core experience is a timeless one. One of strategy, of varying objectives, of a certain amount of freedom, of destruction, of intense planning or just making it up as you go along. It's all still there, and it's all still fun. Start the mission, run south to where the Unguided are bombing the bank, take out their troublemakers, let the bank explode, steal the money from the rubble, profit! Find the one car not confined to roads in the level,

load it up with 50 'persuaded' civilians, land it in the middle of the enemy base, use these innocent lives as human shields, take out your target, profit! It's brilliant, at least when it comes together.

Naturally, it's pretty much nothing like the *Syndicate* released at the beginning of this year, beyond the setting and the fact that multiplayer has a four-player squad system. No drugs, no bank robbing, no Church of the New Epoch except for fleeting mentions, no driving, no blowing up buildings just because they're in your way – yet strangely, it was still very much *Syndicate*.

It is odd that more games haven't lifted wholesale from *Syndicate Wars* over the years. It was ahead of its time somewhat when it came to console games, allowing for freedom and controlled chaos that the player conjured as they saw fit. Destruction-wise there haven't been many cut from the same cloth beyond maybe the *Red Faction* series and *Mercenaries* – and it's safe to say both had that feel of manageable anarchy about them, just like *Syndicate Wars*.

But the main way it hasn't been followed up on is in its genre. Top-down, real-time strategy on console. It just doesn't happen any more. And that's a sad state of affairs.

WHAT WE SAID: Issue 22 • 88%

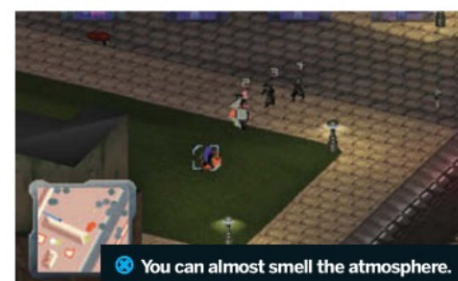
"*Syndicate Wars* is still a very playable game, and many hours of top-class gameplay lie ahead of you, but the endless delays, leaked rumours and overly positive news about the game gave it a name it would have been almost impossible to live up to!"



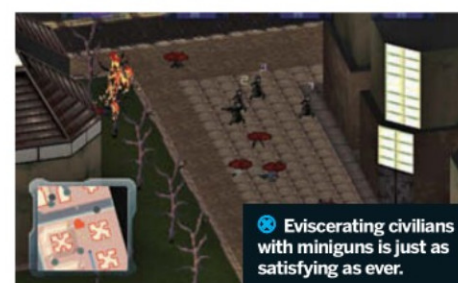
You will be confused by the controls, even if you've played it before.



The Electron Mace bloodily disintegrates victims.



You can almost smell the atmosphere.



Eviscerating civilians with miniguns is just as satisfying as ever.

NEVER COMING TO PSN #9

Exhumed

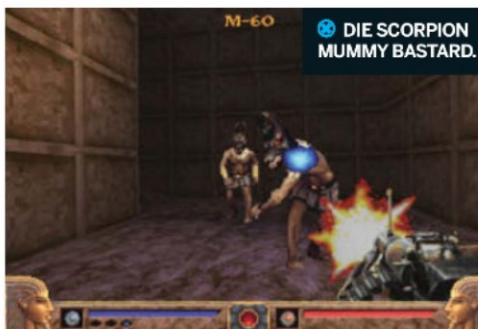


- Release October 1996
- Developer Lobotomy Software

THERE'S A PARTICULAR point in time you can go back to, when first-person shooters were beyond their first tentative steps and were, at least on PC, making strides into a whole new world – one that would change gaming forever. But at that very time, on PSone, we were stuck with something confused: not quite making progress, not quite in limbo. We were stuck with things like *Exhumed*.

Going back to it now, you see how forward-thinking it was – fully 3D environments, non-linear exploration of levels, the need to return and replay areas that you've completed to unlock extras. In many ways, it's far beyond what we get in today's FPS titles. Really, it is.

It's just a shame it looks like ass warmed up, and that it controls as if the developers didn't actually want you to be able to play it. Hold **A** to enable free-look, indeed. Still, there's never been anything quite like this modern-day Egypt-raiding adventure, complete with scorpion shooting. Which makes it all the more annoying that it's unlikely to come to PSN.



WE COULD HAVE DONE WITHOUT

Terminator 3: Rise Of The Machines



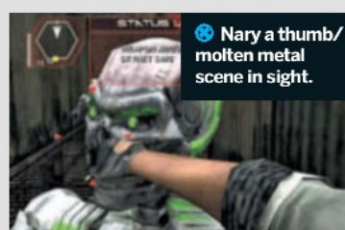
THERE'S BAD, THEN there's this bad. There's so bad you get it confused for a Mega Drive game. There's so bad it ruins your day. There's so bad

it makes the film look good. There's *Terminator 3: Rise Of The Machines*, not to be confused with *Terminator 3: The Redemption*, which wasn't quite as bad.

It's probably more that we were looking forward to some elements of *Rise Of The Machines* (the game), namely the fact that it featured Arnie and that it had some extra deleted

scenes that weren't available anywhere else. One of them showed how the T-800 was programmed with a voice that sounded oddly Austrian. It was a terrible scene and made us want to burn it from our minds with fire.

We never did, though, and it lives on in the mind, popping up every now and then and causing a sudden explosion of vomit to shower the surrounding 30 metres. Stupid crappy supposedly interesting extra features ruining everything for us, even though they're supposed to make it not as painful an experience. Sad times.



RETRO GAMES WE SAID WE WANT TO PLAY AGAIN BUT PROBABLY WON'T



Krazy Ivan

We got as far as watching the introductory FMV sequence before turning this off, though that was mainly because that was the only reason we'd put it on in the first place. Who cares about the actual 'game' part with an intro this good?



Alien Resurrection

It flits in and out of our minds as is, but *Prometheus* put it right back in there. We remember it as actually quite good – scary, definitely – but then we remembered... Nope, can't be bothered.



Felony 11-79

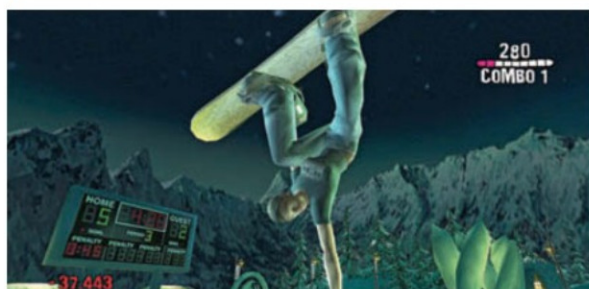
Possibly called *Runabout* in other places, this game of a stupid name is actually still, to this day, fun. We know this because we played it recently, but then we didn't want to play it any more. So it still fits in this column.



Die Hard Trilogy

As we had film tie-ins on the brain, that all-time great, *Die Hard Trilogy*, sprang to mind. Then it sprang right back out as we remembered the lightgun bit and how hard it is to get lightguns working these days and... Nope, can't be bothered.

PS2 CLASSICS REVIEW - SSX ON TOUR



SSX No More

THE ORIGINAL *SSX* was a game finding its feet on the then-new hardware of PS2. The second instalment, *SSX Tricky*, is rightly remembered as brilliant, and those who actually know what they're on about remember it was *SSX 3* that was the best in the series. Then somehow, some way, *SSX On Tour* happened and tried to ruin everything.

Why? How? Well, we don't know the former, but the latter is down to feature creep. Skis? Really? And it is, when compared to the third entry, really quite boring. We initially wondered why EA decided on releasing this version on PSN rather than its superior forebear, but then when the PS3 version of *SSX* came out we suddenly realised: it was to dull the blow. If we'd been fed the best in the series, quickly followed up by that messy rubbish that was the 2012 release, we'd have rioted on the streets.

Well, maybe not gone that far – we're too lazy, after all. But we wouldn't have been happy. Just like we're not happy that we can only get *On Tour* on PSN. We want *SSX 3*, darn it all.

PLAY#221 PlayList

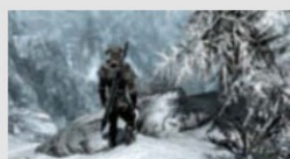
If you want to know what a game scored then these pages are for you

TEAM PICKS TOP FIVE SUMMER GAMES



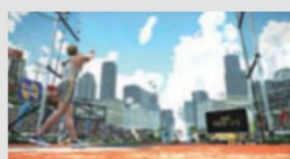
top five RYAN KING

- 1 Virtua Fighter 5: Final Showdown
- 2 Deus Ex: Human Revolution
- 3 Saints Row: The Third
- 4 Batman: Arkham City
- 5 L.A. Noire



top five IAN DRANSFIELD

- 1 The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim
- 2 FIFA 10
- 3 Football Manager Handheld
- 4 Saints Row: The Third
- 5 Rayman Origins



top five STEVE BURNS

- 1 Summer Stars 2012
- 2 PES 6
- 3 PES 2012
- 4 Athens 2004
- 5 Beijing 2008



top five ANDY SALTER

- 1 Lost Planet: Extreme Condition
- 2 Fallout 3: Operation: Anchorage
- 3 SSX
- 4 NHL 11
- 5 Ice Age 3: Dawn Of The Dinosaurs

PS3 LISTING



game	issue	score
3D Collection	195	75%
3D Dot Game Heroes	192	87%
50 Cent: Blood On The Sand	177	70%
Ace Combat: Assault Horizon	211	78%
The Adventures Of Tintin	212	58%
Afro Samurai	177	61%
Agarest: Generations Of War	187	78%
Agarest: Generations Of War Zero	209	52%
Air Conflicts: Secret Wars	208	58%
Alice: Madness Returns	207	57%
Aliens vs Predator	189	79%
Alone In The Dark	173	70%
Alpha Protocol	193	83%
Ape Escape	208	55%
Arcana Heart 3	207	79%
Armored Core For Answer	173	65%
Armored Core 4	153	67%
Armored Core V	217	60%
Army Of Two	164	80%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	188	65%
Ar Tonelico Qoga: Knell Of Ar Ciel	203	27%
Ashes Cricket 2009	183	30%
Assassin's Creed	161	58%
Assassin's Creed II	186	89%
Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood	199	91%
More than enough additions to take the Assassin's Creed formula into modern classic territory.		
Assassin's Creed Revelations	212	75%
Asura's Wrath	216	67%
Atelier Rorona: The Alchemist Of Arland	198	77%
Backbreaker	193	70%
Band Hero	187	68%
Batman: Arkham Asylum	183	85%
Batman: Arkham City	211	94%
Rocksteady's sequel to the excellent Arkham Asylum is a serious contender for game of the year.		
Battle Fantasia	176	67%
Battlefield: Bad Company	168	78%
Battlefield: Bad Company 2	190	93%
Single-player is fairly impressive but take it online and it's bordering on genius. This is quite possibly the best shooter on PS3 today.		
Battlefield 3	212	88%
Battleship	219	44%
Bayonetta*	187	93%
The Beatles: Rock Band	184	96%
Beijing 2008	168	54%
Beowulf	161	61%
Binary Domain	216	70%
Bionic Commando	179	82%
BioShock	172	93%
BioShock 2	189	88%
Birds Of Steel	217	55%
BlackSite	163	43%
Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War	160	58%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger	190	85%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift	198	94%
Blazing Angels	151	54%
Bleach: Soul Resurrección	209	63%
Blitz: The League II	172	67%
Blur	193	86%
Bodycount	210	54%
Borderlands	185	80%
The Bourne Conspiracy	168	72%
Brink	206	67%
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	171	75%
Brütal Legend	185	79%
Bulletstorm	203	86%

game	issue	score
Burnout Paradise	162	74%
Buzz! Quiz TV	168	82%
Buzz! Quiz World	185	70%
Call Of Duty 3	151	77%
Call Of Duty: World At War	173	68%
Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	160	88%
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2	186	94%
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 3	212	88%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops	199	94%
Treyarch's first genuinely brilliant entry to the series and a standard-bearer for fast-paced online shooters.		
Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood	181	85%
Call Of Juarez: The Cartel	208	30%
Captain America: Super Soldier	208	70%
Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow	197	85%
Carnival Island	213	53%
Cars 2	208	68%
Catherine	215	61%
Champion Jockey	210	50%
Chronicles Of Riddick: Assault On Dark Athena	178	87%
Child Of Eden	211	80%
Civilization Revolution	168	90%
Clash Of The Titans	193	65%
Clive Barker's Jericho	159	84%
The Club	163	80%
Colin McRae: DiRT	158	91%
Colin McRae: DiRT 2	184	87%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	178	65%
Conan	160	71%
Condemned 2	165	78%
Conflict: Denied Ops	164	50%
Crash Time 4: The Syndicate	218	37%
Create	199	71%
Cross Edge	182	59%
Crysis 2	204	72%
The Cursed Crusade	211	40%
Damnation	181	38%
Dance Dance Revolution	201	52%
Dante's Inferno	189	80%
The Darkness	154	91%
The Darkness II	215	76%
Dark Sector	165	62%
Dark Souls	211	90%
Sequel to one of the hardest games in recent times, Dark Souls is another superb release from developer From Software.		
Dark Void	188	81%
Darksiders	188	83%
DC Universe Online	202	80%
de Blob 2	203	65%
Dead Island	210	79%
Dead Rising 2	197	78%
Dead Rising 2: Off The Record	211	61%
Dead Space	172	87%
Dead Space 2	201	92%
The point where the Dead Space series stepped up and became something to be genuinely excited about.		
Dead To Rights: Retribution	192	68%
Def Jam: Icon	151	79%
Def Jam Rapstar	199	72%
Demon's Souls	193	92%
Destroy All Humans!: Path Of The Furon	178	29%
Deus Ex: Human Revolution	209	91%
Worries: unfounded. Fun: lots of it. True Deus Ex experience: confirmed. Boss battles: bloody awful.		
Devil May Cry 4	163	89%
Devil May Cry HD Collection	217	80%
DiRT 3	206	85%
DiRT Showdown	219	84%
Disgaea 3: Absence Of Justice	175	81%
DJ Hero	186	91%
DJ Hero 2	198	88%
Doctor Who: The Eternity Clock	220	32%
Dragon Age: Origins	186	82%
Dragon Age II	203	86%

game	issue	score
Dragon Ball: Raging Blast	186	40%
Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit	168	61%
Dragon's Dogma	218	48%
Driver: San Francisco	209	68%
Duke Nukem Forever	207	33%
Dungeon Siege III	206	80%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam	160	40%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 2	176	43%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 3	208	56%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	189	37%
Dynasty Warriors 6	164	30%
Dynasty Warriors 6: Empires	181	44%
Dynasty Warriors 7	204	32%
EA Sports Active 2	200	81%
EA Sports Grand Slam Tennis	215	75%
EA Sports MMA	198	89%
Eat Lead	178	38%
EDF: Insect Armageddon	208	64%
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	152	91%
The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim	212	93%
WARNING: The latest addition to Bethesda's superb franchise will seriously damage your social life.		
El Shaddai: Ascension Of The Metatron	208	77%
Enchanted Arms	152	69%
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars	168	60%
Enslaved: Odyssey To The West	197	83%
Eternal Sonata	176	87%
Everybody's Golf 5*	158	88%
Everybody's Golf: World Tour	165	91%
Eye Of Judgment	159	65%
EyePet	185	83%
EyePet: Move	197	84%
F1 2010	197	86%
F1 2011	211	71%
FaceBreaker	170	55%
Fairytale Fights	186	51%
Fallout 3	173	97%
Fallout 3 lives up to its promise and then some. It's a damning portrayal of the consequences of war, and a compelling RPG experience.		
Fallout: New Vegas	198	88%
Fantastic Four: Rise Of The Silver Surfer	155	39%
Far Cry 2	172	74%
F.E.A.R.	151	81%
F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin	176	87%
F.E.A.R. 3	208	60%
FIFA 08	159	84%
FIFA 09	171	87%
FIFA 10	184	90%
FIFA 11	197	91%
FIFA 12	210	86%
FIFA Street (2012)	217	74%
FIFA Street 3	163	66%
FIFA World Cup 2010	192	70%
The Fight	199	42%
Fight Night Champion	203	88%
Fight Night Round 3	151	87%
Fight Night Round 4	181	84%
Final Fantasy XIII	190	85%
Final Fantasy XIII-2	214	80%
Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage	198	51%
Folklore	158	66%
Formula One Championship Edition	151	72%
Fracture	171	72%
Front Mission Evolved	198	52%
Fuel	180	49%
Full Auto 2: Battlegrounds	151	69%
G-Force	183	59%
Game Of Thrones	220	39%
Genji: Days Of The Blade	151	38%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	83%
Ghost Recon Future Soldier	219	60%
Ghostbusters: The Videogame	180	80%
GI Joe	183	22%
The Godfather	151	37%
The Godfather II	178	38%
God Of War III	190	88%

This month's new entries

The newest games, freshly squeezed among all your old favourites

Darksiders II PS3	88%	Frogger: Hyper Arcade Edition PSN	55%
The Amazing Spider-Man PS3	61%	Lego Batman 2 PS3	80%
London 2012 PS3	45%	Ratchet & Clank Trilogy HD PS3	88%
Lollipop Chainsaw PS3	72%	Resident Evil Chronicles HD Collection PSN	82%
MGS HD Collection PSV	70%	Rainbow Moon PSN	68%
Test Drive		Atelier Meruru: The Apprentice Of Arland PSN	35%
Ferrari Racing Legends PS3	60%		
The Walking Dead Episode 2 PSN	90%		
Quantum Conundrum PSN	90%		

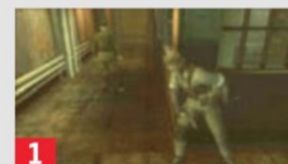
game	issue	score
God Of War Collection*	188	93%
Two of the greatest PS2 action games of all time come together at a bargain price. Essential purchase.		
God Of War Collection: Volume II	210	70%
The Golden Compass	162	32%
GoldenEye 007: Reloaded	213	63%
Gran Turismo 5	200	85%
Gran Turismo 5 Prologue	165	75%
Grand Theft Auto IV	166	98%
Green Day: Rock Band	194	77%
GTA: Episodes From Liberty City	191	94%
Guitar Hero III	160	90%
Guitar Hero III is another great rhythm-action beast, sure to delight fans and newcomers alike. So, grab a guitar and rock out!		
Guitar Hero 5	184	81%
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	168	63%
Guitar Hero Greatest Hits	182	76%
Guitar Hero Metallica	179	88%
Guitar Hero: Van Halen	189	65%
Guitar Hero: Warriors Of Rock	197	71%
Guitar Hero World Tour	173	95%
Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 1	200	21%
Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 2	208	37%
Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince	182	60%
Harry Potter And The Order Of The Phoenix	155	32%
Haze	167	64%
Heavenly Sword	157	71%
Heavy Rain	189	94%
Heavy Rain: Move Edition	198	70%
Heroes Over Europe	184	48%
Homefront	203	69%
The House Of The Dead: Overkill	212	75%
Hunted: The Demon's Forge	207	59%
Hyperdimension Neptunia	202	21%
Ice Age 3: Dawn Of The Dinosaurs	182	47%
Ico & Shadow Of The Colossus Classics HD	210	94%
Largely ignored when they were first released, gamers can now enjoy these wonderful games in brilliant HD.		
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey	183	72%
The Incredible Hulk	168	52%
inFamous	180	81%
inFamous 2	207	83%
International Cricket 2010	194	61%
Inversion	220	49%
Iron Man	166	58%
Iron Man 2	193	50%
The Jak And Daxter Trilogy	216	82%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
James Bond 007: Blood Stone	199	63%
James Cameron's Avatar: The Game	187	64%
JASF: Jane's Advanced Strike Fighters	217	30%
John Daly's ProStroke Golf	197	70%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	159	78%
Just Cause 2	190	87%
Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	160	73%
Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days	196	71%
Katamari Forever	184	88%
Killzone 2	176	93%
Killzone 3	202	80%
Kingdoms Of Amalur: Reckoning	215	70%
The King Of Fighters XII	182	82%
The King Of Fighters XIII	213	76%
Knights Contract	202	53%
Kung Fu Panda 2	207	20%
Kung Fu Rider	196	65%
Lair	158	52%
L.A. Noire	206	91%
Not perfect but Rockstar's new IP introduces pioneering facial-capture technology and interesting gameplay.		
Last Rebellion	191	42%
Legend Of Spyro: Dawn Of The Dragon	174	54%
Legendary	173	62%
Lego Batman	173	65%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4	194	79%

game	issue	score
Lego Harry Potter: Years 5-7	213	67%
Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	167	73%
Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	187	71%
Lego Pirates Of The Caribbean	206	76%
Lego Rock Band	187	75%
Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga	160	76%
Lego Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	204	79%
Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust	180	24%
LittleBigPlanet	172	94%
LittleBigPlanet 2	201	96%
An amazing game and something to get involved with even if you can't create your own stuff.		
The Lord Of The Rings: Aragorn's Quest	199	60%
The Lord Of The Rings: Conquest	175	52%
The Lord Of The Rings: War In The North	213	42%
Lost Planet 2	192	75%
Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	163	69%
Lost: The Video Game	164	38%
Madden NFL 07	151	82%
Madden NFL 08	157	82%
Madden NFL 09	170	83%
Madden NFL 10	184	82%
Madden NFL 11	196	84%
Madden NFL 12	209	85%
Mafia II	196	81%
MAG	189	68%
Majin And The Forsaken Kingdom	199	72%
Marvel vs Capcom 3	202	88%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	151	64%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	185	57%
Max Payne 3	219	77%
Mass Effect 2	201	97%
Mass Effect 3	216	93%
Despite having arguably one of the worst endings in videogame history, this is still a must for any serious videogame collection.		
Medal Of Honor	198	86%
Medal Of Honor Airborne	161	85%
Medieval Moves	213	47%
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	171	78%
Metal Gear Solid 4	167	92%
Not the final Metal Gear Solid game after all then. Still brilliant though, and still largely incomprehensible.		
Metal Gear Solid HD Collection	214	91%
Mobile Suit Gundam: Crossfire	151	37%
Michael Jackson: The Experience	205	58%
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	173	84%
Mindjack	202	38%
Mini Ninjas	184	80%
Mirror's Edge	173	71%
ModNation Racers	192	90%
The best kart racer by far on the PlayStation 3, but combined with incredible levels of creativity, if you love LBP you'll love this, too.		
Monster Madness	170	78%
Mortal Kombat	205	81%
Mortal Kombat vs DC Universe	173	68%
MotoGP 08	172	65%
MotoGP 09/10	190	77%
MotoGP 10/11	204	64%
MotorStorm	151	92%
MotorStorm: Apocalypse	203	76%
MotorStorm: Pacific Rift	172	93%
Mud: FIM Motocross Championship	217	50%
MX vs ATV: Alive	206	42%
MX vs ATV Reflex	189	68%
MX vs ATV Untamed	164	58%
naïf'd	201	61%
Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm	174	59%
Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja Storm Generations	217	53%
NASCAR 08	157	38%
Naughty Bear	195	64%
NBA 07	153	33%
NBA 2K7	151	76%
NBA 2K8	172	71%

game	issue	score
NBA 2K10	186	79%
NBA 2K11	199	82%
NBA 2K12	211	88%
NBA Jam	200	68%
NBA Live 08	158	59%
NBA Live 09	170	81%
NBA Street: Homecourt	151	68%
Need For Speed Carbon	151	76%
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit	199	91%
Hot Pursuit is one of the best arcade racers of all time – pure, unadulterated bliss in game form.		
Need For Speed ProStreet	161	86%
Need For Speed Shift	184	81%
Need For Speed: The Run	213	63%
Need For Speed Undercover	173	75%
NeverDead	215	39%
Nier	192	54%
NHL 2K7	151	80%
NHL 2K9	172	67%
NHL 2K10	186	70%
NHL 09	170	88%
NHL 10	184	85%
NHL 11	198	89%
NHL 12	210	78%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma	154	88%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2	184	82%
Ninja Gaiden 3	217	63%
No More Heroes: Heroes' Paradise	206	89%
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising	185	78%
Operation Flashpoint: Red River	205	75%
The Orange Box	161	93%
Overlord: Raising Hell	167	65%
Overlord II	181	68%
Pain	183	69%
PES 2008	159	70%
PES 2009	172	80%
PES 2010	185	72%
PES 2011	197	73%
PES 2012	210	74%
Phineas & Ferb: Across The 2nd Dimension	211	66%
PixelJunk Racers	160	74%
PlayStation Move Heroes	204	54%
POTC: At World's End	154	48%
Portal 2	205	95%
Another exceptional realisation from Valve, gamers are going to be talking about Portal 2 for a long time to come.		
Prince Of Persia	174	83%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	193	68%
Prince Of Persia Trilogy	200	88%
Prison Break: The Conspiracy	191	40%
Prototype	181	76%
Prototype 2	219	75%
Puma After Hours Athletes	214	58%
Pure	171	80%
Pure Football	194	69%
Quantum Of Solace	175	57%
Quantum Theory	197	29%
Race Driver: GRID	167	85%
Racket Sports	198	37%
Rage	211	60%
Rainbow Six Vegas	155	88%
Rainbow Six Vegas 2	164	78%
Rango	203	54%
Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time	186	82%
Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One	211	68%
Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction	160	72%
Rayman Origins	212	80%
Red Dead Redemption	193	92%
Relocates the familiar GTA formula to a superbly realised new setting and, in many ways, is unlike anything else as a result.		
Red Dead Redemption: Undead Nightmare	199	87%
Red Faction: Armageddon	207	62%
Red Faction: Guerrilla	180	80%
Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City	217	33%
Resident Evil 5	177	86%

*denotes import review

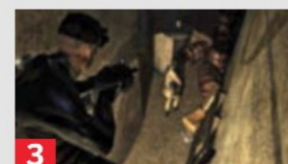
TOP TEN SNEAKY SNEAKERS



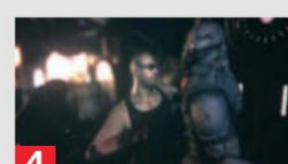
1 Metal Gear Solid HD Collection



2 Metal Gear Solid 4



3 Splinter Cell HD Collection



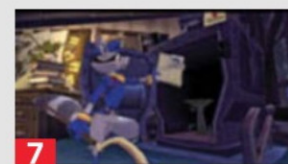
4 The Chronicles Of Riddick: Assault On Dark Athena



5 Hitman: Blood Money



6 Assassin's Creed II



7 Sly Cooper Trilogy



8 Tenuku



9 Deus Ex: Human Revolution



10 Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath HD

PS3 TOP FIVES



FPS

- 1 Battlefield 3
- 2 Modern Warfare 3
- 3 Resistance 3
- 4 Portal 2
- 5 Deus Ex: Human Revolution



RACING

- 1 WipEout 2048
- 2 DiRT: Showdown
- 3 Gran Turismo 5
- 4 Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit
- 5 MotorStorm RC



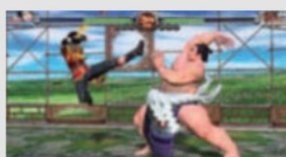
PS VITA

- 1 WipEout 2048
- 2 Gravity Rush
- 3 Everybody's Golf
- 4 Uncharted: Golden Abyss
- 5 FIFA Football



ADVENTURE

- 1 Mass Effect 3
- 2 The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim
- 3 Dark Souls
- 4 Saints Row: The Third
- 5 inFamous 2



FIGHTING

- 1 Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike
- 2 Virtua Fighter 5: Final Showdown
- 3 BlazBlue: Continuum Shift Extend
- 4 Skullgirls
- 5 SoulCalibur V

game issue score

Resident Evil 5: Gold Edition	190	86%
Resistance: Fall Of Man	151	83%
Resistance 2	173	90%



With its impressive set pieces and glorious multiplayer mode, *Resistance 2* is one of the best FPSs on the PS3.

Resistance 3	210	88%
Resonance Of Fate	191	79%
Ridge Racer 7	151	75%
Ridge Racer Unbounded	217	67%
Rise Of The Argonauts	176	58%
Rock Band	169	94%
Rock Band 2	179	96%



With the incredible tracklist, tweaked engine, and new modes, this is easily the best rhythm-action game currently available.

Rock Band 3	199	84%
Rogue Warrior	188	09%
Rugby World Cup 2011	209	49%
Rune Factory Oceans	220	51%
R.U.S.E.	197	82%
The Saboteur	187	67%
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel	180	76%
Saints Row 2	172	79%
Saints Row: The Third	211	88%
SBK Generations	220	51%
Saint Seiya: Sanctuary Battle	216	52%
Saw	186	52%
Saw II: Flesh & Blood	198	36%
Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection	177	85%
SBK 08	172	55%
SBK 2011	206	70%
SBK Generations	220	54%
SBK X: Superbike World Championship	193	67%
Sega Rally	158	92%



Simply the best rally game on the PS3. Unless simulation is your bag then you'll want to go for *Colin McRae*. Not much in it, really.

Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes	198	76%
Shadows Of The Damned	207	79%
Shaun White Skateboarding	198	70%
Shaun White Snowboarding	173	72%
Shellshock 2: Blood Trails	177	32%
Shift 2: Unleashed	204	66%
The Shoot	199	76%
Silent Hill: Downpour	217	81%
Silent Hill HD Collection	217	76%
Silent Hill: Homecoming	174	64%
The Simpsons Game	160	82%
The Sims 3	199	87%
The Sims 3: Pets	212	70%
SingStar	159	80%
SingStar Guitar	199	70%
SingStar Pop Edition	179	81%
Singularity	195	80%
Skate	159	86%
Skate 2	175	82%
Skate 3	192	86%
The Sly Collection	200	84%
Sniper Elite V2	218	52%
Sniper: Ghost Warrior	206	45%
SOCOM: Special Forces	205	63%
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	190	78%
Sonic Generations	212	70%
Sonic The Hedgehog	151	52%
Sonic Unleashed	175	48%
Sorcery	219	76%
SoulCalibur IV	169	94%
SoulCalibur V	214	80%
Spec Ops: The Line	220	59%
Spider-Man 3	155	33%
Spider-Man: Edge Of Time	212	38%
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	197	69%
Spider-Man: Web Of Shadows	173	55%
Splatterhouse	200	58%
Splinter Cell Double Agent	153	79%
Split/Second: Velocity	192	90%



Just beating *Blur* to the chequered flag, *Split/Second* is a wonderfully intense racing game in the *Burnout* mould.

Sports Champions	196	83%
SSX	216	45%
Starhawk	219	81%
Star Ocean: The Last Hope International	190	63%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	171	65%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II	199	61%
Start The Party!	196	72%
Stormrise	178	51%

game issue score

Stranglehold	159	65%
Street Fighter IV	176	95%
Street Fighter X Tekken	217	83%
Super Street Fighter IV: Arcade Edition	207	88%
Stuntman: Ignition	157	82%
SuperCar Challenge	183	66%
Superstars V8: Next Challenge	190	55%
Superstars V8 Racing	181	63%
Super Street Fighter IV	191	90%



The fact that you're buying a lot of stuff you've probably bought already is the only drawback to what is the best fighter ever made.

Supremacy MMA	211	40%
Syndicate	216	78%
Tekken 6	184	94%



There are flaws that hurt the experience, but nothing, nothing, stops *Tekken 6* from being an intense, tactical and brilliant fighting game.

Tekken Hybrid	213	79%
Test Drive Unlimited 2	203	62%
Thor: God Of Thunder	206	38%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07	151	88%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	158	73%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09	171	86%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10	181	69%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11	194	60%
Tiger Woods PGA 12: The Masters	204	65%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 13	217	70%
Time Crisis 4	166	69%
Time Crisis: Razing Storm	199	58%
TimeShift	162	72%
TNA Impact!	171	71%
Tom Clancy's EndWar	173	80%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X.	177	75%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2	196	69%
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Trilogy HD	210	78%
Tomb Raider Trilogy	204	86%
Tomb Raider: Underworld	173	83%
Tony Hawk's Project 8	151	85%
Tony Hawk's Proving Ground	160	72%
Tony Hawk: Ride	188	52%
Top Gun: Hard Lock	218	45%
Top Spin 3	168	71%
Top Spin 4	203	60%
Tornado Outbreak	186	56%
Toy Story 3	195	82%
Transformers: Dark Of The Moon	208	64%
Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen	182	41%
Transformers: The Game	156	34%
Transformers: War For Cybertron	194	80%
Trinity: Souls Of Zill O'll	202	56%
Trinity Universe	194	61%
Tron Evolution	200	17%
Turning Point: Fall Of Liberty	165	40%
Turok	163	46%
TV Superstars	199	53%
Twisted Metal	216	68%
Two Worlds II	203	64%
UEFA Euro 2008	165	62%
UFC Undisputed 2009	180	90%



Undisputed is gorgeous to look at, it's incredibly deep, and it's one of the most addictive fighters we've played in ages.

UFC Undisputed 2010	193	88%
UFC Undisputed 3	215	82%
Ultimate Marvel vs Capcom 3	212	78%
Uncharted: Drake's Fortune	161	87%
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	185	96%
Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception	212	90%



Fans of the series won't be disappointed as *Drake* returns with some exceptional set pieces and superb action.

Unreal Tournament III	162	88%
Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom	151	54%
Valkyria Chronicles	173	82%
Vancouver 2010	189	76%
Vanquish	197	93%



A brilliant surprise from the developer of *Bayonetta* and easily one of the best games we've played in 2010.

Viking: Battle For Asgard	165	74%
Virtua Fighter 5	151	83%
Virtua Tennis 2009	180	80%
Virtua Tennis 3	150	91%
Virtua Tennis 4	205	79%
Wanted: Weapons Of Fate	179	63%
Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine	210	51%
Warhawk	157	84%

game issue score

Warriors: Legends Of Troy	202	14%
Warriors Orochi 3	217	59%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
Way Of The Samurai 3	190	16%
Wet	184	41%
Wheelman	178	72%
Where The Wild Things Are	188	56%
White Knight Chronicles	190	55%
White Knight Chronicles II	207	49%
Wolfenstein	183	72%
World Snooker Championship 2007	151	56%
WRC: FIA World Rally Championship	197	76%
WRC 2: FIA World Rally Championship	211	63%
WSC REAL 09: World Snooker Championship	177	67%
WSC Real 11	204	69%
WWE All Stars	204	82%
WWE Legends Of WrestleMania	178	80%
WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2008	159	88%
WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2009	173	74%
WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2010	185	77%
WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2011	199	63%
WWE '12	212	50%
X-Blades	178	54%
X-Men Destiny	211	35%
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	179	71%
Yakuza: Dead Souls	216	60%
Yakuza 3	191	80%
Yakuza 4	203	79%
Yoostar 2: In The Movies	204	60%

PS VITA LISTING



A-Men	217	70%
Army Corps Of Hell	217	64%
Everybody's Golf	215	86%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift Extend	216	85%
Escape Plan	216	81%
FIFA Football	216	80%
Gravity Rush	219	86%
Hustle Kings	216	81%
Little Deviants	215	69%
Lumines Electric Symphony	216	85%
ModNation Racers: Road Trip	215	59%
Mortal Kombat	219	83%
MotorStorm RC	217	81%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma Plus	217	72%
Rayman Origins	216	84%
Reality Fighters	215	52%
Resistance: Burning Skies	219	54%
Ridge Racer	216	48%
Super Stardust Delta	216	84%
Touch My Katamari	216	83%
Ultimate Marvel vs Capcom 3	216	80%
Uncharted: Golden Abyss	215	83%
Unit 13	216	67%
Virtua Tennis 4: World Tour Edition	215	81%
WipEout 2048	215	87%

PS STORE LISTING





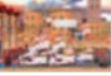

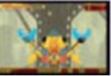
1942: Joint Strike	170	74%
3-On-3 NHL Arcade	177	62%
After Burner Climax	193	91%


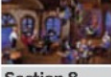



Classic, frantic and utterly brilliant arcade action from Sega. A fine example of what the company is best known for.

Age Of Booty	172	81%
Alien Breed: Impact	196	80%
Alien Breed 2: Assault	201	82%
Alien Breed 3: Descent	204	61%
All Zombies Must Die!	214	64%
Amy	215	19%
Anarchy: Rush Hour	194	73%
Aqua Panic	193	68%
Arc The Lad	215	79%
Armageddon Riders	207	65%
Back To The Future: It's About Time	204	71%
The Baoning	210	72%
Battlefield 1943	182	89%
Beat Hazard Ultra	213	79%
Beat Sketcher	201	85%
Beyond Good & Evil HD	207	86%
Bishi Bashi Special!	175	61%

game	issue	score
Bionic Commando Rearmed	169	88%
Bionic Commando Rearmed 2	203	61%
Blacklight: Tango Down	200	64%
Blade Kitten	197	72%
Blast Factor	152	72%
Blokus	202	54%
BloodRayne: Betrayal	211	62%
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode I	188	65%
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode II	188	61%
Blue Toad Murder Files Episodes 4/5/6	193	70%
Bomberman Ultra	185	82%
Braid	188	93%
 We had to wait quite a while, but time is what we have plenty of both with and for <i>Braid</i> . Simply brilliant.		
Burn Zombie Burn	178	85%
Burnout Crash	211	79%
Call Of Duty Classic	188	90%
Calling All Cars	155	81%
Castle Crashers	200	88%
Castlevania: Harmony Of Despair	212	67%
Catan	195	85%
Chime Super Deluxe	203	80%
Comet Crash	186	84%
Comix Zone	210	62%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert	16	79%
Command & Conquer Red Alert: Retaliation	176	55%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	168	70%
Commander's Challenge	185	68%
Command & Conquer	175	44%
Cool Boarders	173	57%
Cool Boarders 2	175	31%
Costume Quest	199	70%
Crash Bandicoot	172	77%
Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped	174	82%
Crash Commando	174	80%
Crash Team Racing	170	79%
Crazy Machines Elements	210	71%
Crazy Taxi	200	80%
Crescent Pale Mist	200	70%
Critter Crunch	188	91%
Crystal Defenders	184	48%
Cubix HD	207	76%
Dark Mist	164	53%
Dead Nation	201	86%
Dead Space: Extraction	203	88%
Dead Space: Ignition	199	47%
DeathSpank	195	83%
Destruction Derby	01	80%
.detuned	186	50%
Deus Ex	219	83%
Digger HD	186	52%
Diner Dash	190	66%
Driver	171	90%
Droplitz	184	91%
Earthworm Jim HD	196	89%
Eat Them!	202	60%
echochrome	169	85%
echochrome II	202	83%
Elefunk	170	45%
Euforia	212	85%
ExploDemom	203	70%
Fat Princess	183	65%
Fatal Inertia EX	168	65%
FIFA 09 Ultimate Team	178	61%
Final Fight: Double Impact	193	90%
Final Fantasy VII	181	96%
 Even after all these years it still holds up, in fact, our mark seems to have gone up 3% since 1997.		
Final Fantasy VIII	190	90%
Final Fantasy IX	195	90%
Flight Control HD	198	85%
Flock!	179	70%
fIOW	151	90%
Flower	176	85%
Frogger Returns	190	35%
From Dust	211	82%
Funky Lab Rat	201	70%
G-Police	27	84%
Galaxy Fight	215	27%
Gatling Gears	207	62%
Geon	175	71%
Go! Puzzle	152	58%
God Hand	216	83%
Gotham City Impostors	216	78%

game	issue	score
Gran Turismo HD	150	75%
Gravity Crash	187	85%
Greed Corp	191	75%
Greg Hastings Paintball 2	219	22%
GTI Club+	174	72%
Gundemonium Collection	197	80%
Gunstar Heroes	181	85%
Hamsterball	194	72%
Hardcore 4x4	15	81%
Hasbro Family Game Night	187	60%
Heavy Weapon	187	75%
High Velocity Bowling	163	50%
Hi-Octane	178	64%
The House Of The Dead 4	218	82%
Hustle Kings	190	87%
Hyperballoid HD	188	70%
I Am Alive	217	64%
inFamous: Festival Of Blood	212	76%
Inferno Pool	181	81%
International Track & Field	171	80%
Interpol: The Trail Of Doctor Chaos	185	48%
Invincible Tiger: The Legend Of Han Tao	185	70%
Jet Rider 2	176	71%
Joe Danger	194	96%
 Simply put, <i>Joe Danger</i> is one of the best games you'll currently find on the PSN. Buy it. Buy it now.		
Journey	216	87%
Judge Dredd	18	19%
Jumping Flash	172	55%
Jurassic Park: The Game	214	32%
Kick-Ass The Game	194	60%
Kula World	172	71%
Kung-Fu Live	201	42%
Landit Bandit	195	66%
Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light	198	90%
The Last Guy	171	91%
Lead & Gold: Gangs Of The Wild West	193	65%
Lemmings	151	79%
Limbo	209	90%
Linger In Shadows	173	69%
LocoRoco Cocoreccho!	159	80%
Lumines Supernova	178	90%
Madden NFL Arcade	188	58%
Mad Riders	220	70%
Magic Carpet	179	65%
Magic: The Gathering: Duels Of The Planeswalkers	202	84%
Magic: The Gathering: Duels Of The Planeswalkers 2012	208	70%
Marvel vs Capcom 2	182	90%
Matt Hazard: Blood Bath And Beyond	189	69%
Medal Of Honor: Frontline	210	52%
MediEvil	173	45%
Mega Man 9	172	75%
Mega Man 10	192	82%
Metal Gear Solid	187	93%
 While it looks rather rough now, the game itself remains a real high point in the franchise. Simply essential.		
Metal Gear Solid Online	175	45%
Microbot	202	51%
Monkey Island 2: Special Edition	195	94%
Motorhead	173	60%
Namco Museum Essentials	193	60%
Naruto Shippuden: Kizuna Drive	205	42%
NBA Jam: On Fire Edition	212	64%
Noby Noby Boy	177	85%
Nucleus	155	82%
Numblast	183	60%
N2O	37	70%
Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath HD	214	86%
Outland	207	72%
OutRun Online Arcade	180	80%
Pac-Man Championship Edition DX	201	91%
Payday: The Heist	213	88%
Pain	183	69%
Peggle	189	94%
Pinballistik	215	75%
PixelJunk 4am	220	40%
PixelJunk Eden	169	67%
PixelJunk Monsters	163	94%
PixelJunk Shooter	187	93%
PixelJunk Shooter 2	204	90%
 If you like challenges, shooting, pixels and junk, then this combines all four of those and adds in several splashes of style as well.		
PixelJunk SideScroller	213	77%
Piyotama	162	62%

game	issue	score
Planet Minigolf	196	58%
Polar Panic	190	65%
Populous: The Beginning	46	70%
Prince Of Persia Classic	173	67%
Puddle	216	76%
The Punisher: No Mercy	182	49%
Puzzle Chronicles	194	70%
Puzzle Dimension	208	81%
Puzzle Quest Galactrix	181	68%
Q*bert	58	53%
Rag Doll Kung Fu: Fists Of Plastic	179	83%
Rampage: World Tour	29	77%
Ratchet & Clank: Quest For Booty	170	69%
Rayman	01	76%
Rayman 3 HD	217	77%
Renegade Ops	211	78%
Resident Evil 4 HD	210	93%
 One of the best games ever made comes to PSN. Unfortunately it also brings with it a rather high price tag.		
Resident Evil Code Veronica X	211	72%
Revenge Of The Wounded Dragons	191	60%
Riff: Everyday Shooter	162	86%
Risk: Nations	202	80%
Rocketbirds: Hardboiled Chicken	212	82%
Rocket Knight	194	74%
Rocketmen: Axis Of Evil	165	63%
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 1	194	90%
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 2	194	92%
Sega Rally Online Arcade	208	74%
Savage Moon	175	87%
Scott Pilgrim vs The World	197	77%
The Secret Of Monkey Island Special Edition	195	92%
 LucasArts' classic point-and-click adventure gets an HD makeover and will hopefully be the first of many classics heading to PSN.		
Section 8	193	78%
Section 8: Prejudice	209	80%
Shank	197	86%
Shatter	183	91%
Sheep	171	78%
Shoot Many Robots	217	81%
The Simpsons: Arcade Game	216	54%
Siren Blood Curse	170	62%
Skullgirls	218	88%
Smash Cars	184	50%
SOCOM Confrontation	178	55%
Soldner-X 2: Final Prototype	195	70%
Sonic Adventure	198	63%
Sonic CD	214	82%
Sonic The Hedgehog 4: Episode I	199	82%
Sonic The Hedgehog 4: Episode II	220	40%
Spin Jam	174	32%
Snakeball	176	92%
Stacking	203	88%
Star Trek: D-A-C	189	57%
Street Fighter Alpha: Warrior's Dream	159	57%
Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike Online Edition	209	92%
 The best version of one of the best fighting games ever released, or something. We don't know, mainly because Ryan isn't writing this.		
Street Skater 2	178	40%
Super Puzzle Fighter II HD Turbo Remix	168	78%
Super Rub-A-Dub	151	83%
Supersonic Acrobatic Rocket-Powered Battle-Cars	177	65%
Super Stardust HD	155	74%
Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix	176	72%
Switchball	191	75%
Swords And Soldiers	199	88%
Syphon Filter	48	93%
Syphon Filter 3	170	80%
Tales Of Monkey Island	196	91%
Tank Battles	186	68%
Tekken HD	150	80%
Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online	161	87%
Tetris	202	84%
Theme Hospital	32	80%
Theme Park	174	80%
TMNT: Turtles In Time Re-shelled	186	57%
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six	54	34%
Top Darts	202	71%
Top Gun	198	53%
Topota: Spinning Through The Worlds	183	61%
ToyHome	162	31%
Trash Panic	181	79%
Trials Of Topaq	159	50%
Trine	184	85%
Tumble	198	70%

PS3'S BEST GAMES ALPHA PROTOCOL 83%, PLAY193



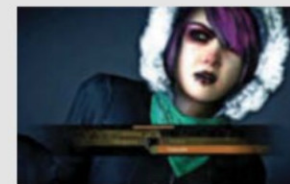
There comes a period not long after one finishes with a sumptuous morsel of RPG joy when they are left wanting more. Earlier this year, we finished with *Skyrim* and wanted more. We got *Mass Effect 3*. It was bliss.



But where is a committed RPG player, hungry for more role-playing goodness, to turn once done with these? Try *Alpha Protocol*. No, really. Do. You might have heard bad things from some places, but these places are wrong.



Okay, so it was a bit flaky on release, but it's patched up now and rarely suffers game-breaking problems. And yes, it's an odd one in that it's not great-looking and plays like a weird mash-up of genres – something of a proto-*Mass Effect 3*, in some ways.



But it's a damn solid RPG with mechanics we're still waiting to see ripped off in other releases. The conversation system – you have a limited time to respond – borders on genius, and the cause and effect systems are robust and deep.



Why did people ignore *Alpha Protocol*? We're not sure. Maybe it was the lack of marketing; maybe it was people being confused as to what it really is. But we know: it's a ruddy good game is what it is.

DOWNLOAD THESE FIGHTING EDITION



STREET FIGHTER III: 3RD STRIKE ONLINE EDITION

92%, Play 209

If you like punching, parrying and pyreballing – like fireball but with P, see – then have one of the best 2D fighters ever.



VIRTUA FIGHTER 5: FINAL SHOWDOWN

90%, Play 220

Tech as tech can be. The learning curve can be off-putting, but it doesn't stop VF5 from being ruddy brilliant.



SKULLGIRLS

88%, Play 219

We'll avoid the talk of the rather over-sexualised girls on show here and concentrate on the damn fine fighting game contained under the hood.



MARVEL VS CAPCOM 2

90%, Play 182

It's old, but in many ways it's better than MVC3. If only because of Cable. And Amingo.



TEKKEN 5: DARK RESURRECTION ONLINE

87%, Play 161

If you like endumbering your brawlers a bit, just go with Tekken. And smack people in the face with Jack.



BLAZBLUE: CS

94%, Play 198

Ridiculous special moves, lots of content, loud explosions and a cloud-ghost thing.

game	issue	score
Under Siege	207	71%
Uno	189	85%
Vagrant Story	189	82%
Vandal Hearts: Flames Of Judgment	192	87%
Virtua Fighter 5: Final Showdown	220	90%
The Walking Dead	219	89%
Wakeboarding HD	192	65%
Warhawk: Operation Fallen Star	171	80%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?	214	79%
WipEout	01	89%
WipEout HD	172	84%
Wolfenstein	181	70%
Wonder Boy In Monster Land	220	50%
Worms	179	91%
Worms 2: Armageddon	198	87%
Worms Battle Islands	201	80%
Worms Crazy Golf	213	82%
Worms: Ultimate Mayhem	217	80%
X-Men Arcade	203	60%
Yars' Revenge	206	57%
Zack Zero	215	73%
Zombie Apocalypse: Never Die Alone	213	69%
Zuma	182	78%

PSP LISTING



The 3rd Birthday	203	80%
300: March To Glory	152	59%
Ace Combat X	147	72%
Ace Combat: Joint Assault	194	79%
After Burner: Black Falcon	152	82%
Ape Academy 2	145	52%
Ape Escape P	140	37%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	190	45%
Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines	187	77%
Astonishia Story	142	68%
Beaterator	186	72%
Blade Dancer: Lineage Of Light	145	45%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger Portable	194	84%
Blood Bowl	184	53%
Bombberman	150	83%
Boulder Dash: Rocks!	165	69%
Breath Of Fire III	138	82%
Brothers In Arms: D-Day	149	69%
Burnout Dominator	153	65%
Burnout Legends	134	94%
Buzz! Brain Bender	175	68%
Capcom Classics Collection Reloaded	147	80%
Capcom Classics Collection Remixed	141	72%
Cars	143	60%
Castlevania: The Dracula X Chronicles	163	78%
Championship Manager	137	65%
Championship Manager 2006	140	32%
Cid The Dummy	180	32%
Coded Arms	134	53%
Call Of Duty: Roads To Victory	153	69%
Colin McRae Rally 2005 Plus	134	84%
The Con	153	59%
Crisis Core: Final Fantasy VII	167	87%
Crush	154	80%
The Cube	153	64%
Dante's Inferno	191	76%
Dead Or Alive: Paradise	192	56%
Disgaea: Afternoon Of Darkness	161	92%
Dissidia: Final Fantasy	184	60%
Dissidia Q12 Final Fantasy	203	79%
Disgaea 2: Dark Hero Days	190	87%
Dragon Ball Z: Shin Budokai 2	154	50%
Driver 76	154	68%
Dungeons & Dragons: Tactics	159	55%
Dungeon Siege: Throne Of Agony	148	85%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	179	69%
EA Replay	147	74%
echochrome	169	85%
echoshift	191	73%
Everybody's Golf 2	167	86%
Everybody's Tennis	195	88%
Every Extend Extra	145	84%
Exit	138	65%
The Eye Of Judgment: Legends	191	57%
EyePet	199	77%
F1 2009	187	66%
Fate/Extra	219	60%
Field Commander	145	83%
FIFA 06	136	43%
FIFA 07	147	81%
FIFA 11	198	69%

*denotes import review

game	issue	score
FIFA World Cup 2010	193	65%
Fired Up	134	60%
Final Fantasy	164	63%
Final Fantasy IV: The Complete Collection	204	80%
Final Fantasy Tactics	159	86%
FlatOut: Head On	164	79%
Football Manager 2007	147	62%
Football Manager Handheld 2008	161	49%
Football Manager Handheld 2010	187	60%
Formula One 06	143	78%
Frantix	136	36%
Gangs Of London	144	65%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	42%
Ghost Recon Predator	200	60%
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	188	55%
Ghostbusters: Sanctum Of Slime	204	51%
Gitaroo Man Lives!	144	79%
Gladiator Begins	206	52%
Go! Sudoku	137	45%
The Godfather: Mob Wars	136	66%
Gods Eater Burst	202	88%
God Of War: Chains Of Olympus	165	84%
God Of War: Ghost Of Sparta	199	79%
Gradius Collection	144	80%
Gran Turismo	184	85%
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars	185	95%
GTA: Liberty City Stories	135	95%
GTA: Vice City Stories	147	96%
Half-Minute Hero	191	87%
Hard Corps: Uprising	204	78%
Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire	136	69%
Hellboy: Science Of Evil	170	60%
Holy Invasion Of Privacy: Badman!	186	73%
What Did I Do To Deserve This?	155	73%
Hot Pixel	155	73%
Indiana Jones And The Staff Of Kings	181	60%
Infected	141	68%
Innocent Life: A Futuristic Harvest Moon	154	70%
International Athletics	170	40%
Invizimals	187	71%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
Juiced: Eliminator	141	70%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	160	80%
Kao Challengers	137	60%
Killzone: Liberation	146	83%
Kingdom Hearts: Birth By Sleep	196	88%
The Legend Of Heroes: Trails In The Sky	214	75%
Lemmings	138	63%
LittleBigPlanet	186	90%
LocoRoco	143	94%
LocoRoco 2	173	82%
LocoRoco Midnight Carnival	186	81%
Lord Of Arcana	202	65%
The Lord Of The Rings: Tactics	136	66%
Lumines II	137	74%
Madden NFL 06	137	74%
Marvel Trading Cards	155	38%
Me And My Katamari	138	86%
Medal Of Honor Heroes	147	72%
MediEvil: Resurrection	134	53%
Mercury Meltdown	145	66%
Metal Slug Anthology	150	91%
Metal Gear Acid 2	138	92%
Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker	193	92%
Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops	150	91%
Miami Vice	144	82%
Micro Machines V4	142	71%
Might & Magic: Clash Of Heroes	205	84%
ModNation Racers	193	70%
Monster Hunter Freedom	140	81%
Monster Hunter Freedom 2	157	59%
Monster Hunter Freedom Unite	181	77%
Moon Diver	205	46%
MotoGP	146	75%
Motorstorm: Arctic Edge	184	72%
Mytran Wars	179	85%
Namco Museum Battle Collection	136	68%
Naruto Shippuden Legends	185	46%
Naruto Ultimate Ninja Heroes 2	169	46%
NBA Ballers: Rebound	139	61%
Need For Speed Undercover	175	57%
No Heroes Allowed	199	69%
OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast	139	93%
PaRappa The Rapper	155	88%
Patapon	163	86%
Patapon 2	177	87%
Patapon 3	205	81%
Patchwork Heroes	192	85%
Persona 2: Innocent Sin	214	65%
Pirates Of The Caribbean	143	52%
PixelJunk Monster Deluxe	185	86%

game	issue	score
Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	163	77%
Pocket Racers	144	49%
PoPoLoCrois	142	71%
Power Stone Collection	145	88%
PQ – Practical Intelligence Quotient	141	52%
Prince Of Persia Revelations	138	69%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	194	52%
Prinny: Can I Really Be The Hero?	181	80%
PSN Collection: Power Pack	173	70%
PSN Collection: Puzzle Pack	173	54%
Pursuit Force	134	83%
Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice	159	76%
Puzzle Chronicles	190	61%
Puzzle Quest	153	66%
R-Type Tactics	170	74%
Rainbow Six Vegas	156	78%
Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters	154	78%
Red Faction: Battlegrounds	205	78%
Rengoku 2	144	72%
Resistance: Retribution	177	76%
Ridge Racer 2	145	78%
Ridge Racer	132	91%
Rock Band Unplugged	181	92%
Rocky Balboa	150	68%
Secret Agent Clank	169	79%
Sega Mega Drive Collection	177	79%
Sega Rally	158	90%
Shin Megami Tensei: Persona 3 Portable	206	78%
Shinobido: Tales Of The Ninja	150	60%
Silent Hill Origins	160	87%
Silent Hill: Shattered Memories	190	52%
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SOCOM Fire Team 2	154	70%
SOCOM: Fireteam Bravo 3	190	71%
SOCOM: Tactical Strike	160	85%
SOCOM: US Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo	140	69%
Sonic Rivals	147	70%
Sonic Rivals 2	162	35%
SoulCalibur: Broken Destiny	183	92%
Spider-Man 3	162	32%
Spinout	149	81%
Splinter Cell: Essentials	139	71%
Split/Second: Velocity	200	71%
SSX On Tour	138	76%
Star Ocean: Second Evolution	178	78%
Star Trek: Tactical Assault	148	59%
Star Wars Battlefront II	137	74%
Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron	187	65%
Star Wars: Lethal Alliance	148	69%
Star Wars: Renegade Squadron	160	78%
Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max	138	70%
Street Riders	140	29%
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Swarm	204	78%
Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror	140	90%
Tekken 6	187	90%
Tekken: Dark Resurrection	143	92%
Tactics Ogre: Let Us Cling Together	202	81%
Tenchu: Shadow Assassins	179	71%
Tenchu: Time Of The Assassins	146	51%
TNA Impact! Cross The Line	189	58%
TOCA 3	152	70%
Tokobot	140	79%
Tomb Raider: Anniversary	156	81%
Tomb Raider: Legend	140	72%
Twisted Metal Head-On	134	54%
UFC Undisputed 2010	197	80%
Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins	145	88%
Undead Knights	189	46%
Untold Legends: The Warrior's Code	140	59%
Valhalla Knights	158	49%
Valkyria Chronicles 2	196	87%
Valkyrie Profile: Lenneth	153	78%
Viewtiful Joe: Red Hot Rumble	140	82%
Virtua Tennis 3	152	88%
Warhammer 40,000: Squad Command	161	70%
What Did I Do To Deserve This My Lord!? 2	192	78%
WipEout Pulse	159	86%
WipEout Pure	138	91%
World Of Pool	156	43%
World Tour Poker	141	67%
World Tour Soccer 2	142	40%
Worms: Open Warfare 2	157	80%
WWE SmackDown! vs Raw 2006	137	84%
WWE SmackDown! vs Raw 2007	147	80%
World Rally Championship	134	67%



IAN DRANSFIELD
WHAT (HAVE THEY BEEN PLAYING?):
SUPER HANG-ON

WHY (WAS IT CHOSEN?):
It takes me back, to better* days. *Not better

DO YOU REMEMBER the past? I do, but mine is a bit confused. See, I had *Super Hang-On* on the Amiga, not the Mega Drive, and I never played it in the arcade. Mainly because when it came out I was four. But even though that's the case, I still love it like an adopted child, so I welcomed it with open arms when Sega announced that it was bringing it to PSN.

My arms closed on playing it, though. But not out of hatred, or anger, or the fact that I realised my adopted child was stealing money from my very masculine purse. No, this was out of fear and respect: fear that I wouldn't be able to finish the very first, beginner stage, and respect for the fact that a game released in 1987 is both intensely challenging and a hell of a lot of fun to play. It's unfair and irritating, as are most games initially released in arcades, but it's also hypnotic and utterly captivating. I consider you my flesh and blood, adopted *Hang-On* child.



PLAYING THE PLAYLIST

What has the Play team been indulging in this month?



RYAN KING
WHAT (HAVE THEY BEEN PLAYING?):
U MARVEL VS CAPCOM 3

WHY (WAS IT CHOSEN?):
Because it's too hard

ULTIMATE MARVEL VS Capcom 3 might be the hardest game in the world. It actually is. Playing online makes you feel like a toddler wandering into an MMA gym, the sound of mats and punchbags being thumped coming to a record screech halt as everyone examines you in close detail. Before you can ask where you put your gear, you're lying on your back with a bloody nose while everyone kicks you in the ribs.

It's the most hardcore of playgrounds where there is no room for experimentation, error or extravagance. No game shocks you as much with its potential to put you in situations where only hardened experience teaches you the right response. Which way are you supposed to block when Sentinel drones are floating towards you from the left while Dr Strange teleports to your right? How about when a Rocket Raccoon trap is in front of you so you can't retaliate against Dante pressure? When Wesker has activated X-Factor and is stomping all over you?

I'm just not flipping good enough to compete with the hardest of the hardcore. AND IT MAKES ME MAD. So mad that I stomp my feet, I go, "Ooooh, I'm so mad!" in feeble and needlessly camp protest, and then I end up playing something that doesn't fight back. Like *Megamind*. Or *Naughty Bear*. Sigh. Where did my life go wrong?

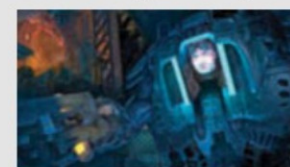
PLAY'S BEST GAMES IF YOU LIKE...



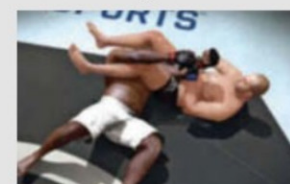
Remembering the past
PLAY: MOTORSTORM
Launched with the PS3 and still surprisingly good fun – and it looks half-decent too. But most importantly, it can remind you of a time when Pendulum were considered cool, even though everything they do sounds the same.



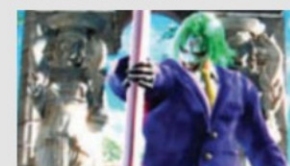
Downloading billions of patches
PLAY: GRAN TURISMO 5
Granted, once you've downloaded all the patches you're left with what is now a robust and engaging racing game – one of the best on PS3. But first you have to sit through about 900,000GB of downloads. Approximately.



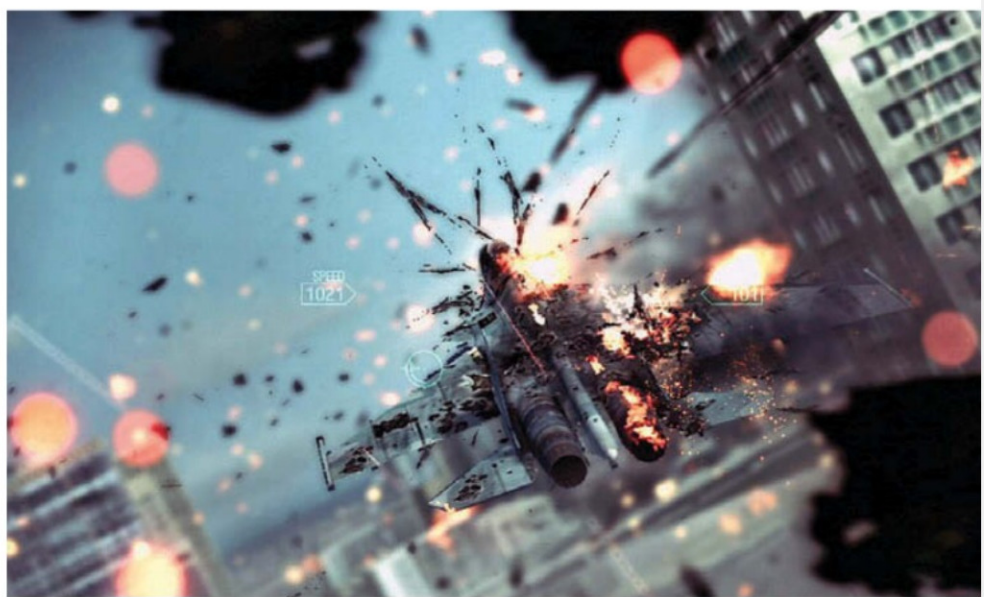
Reminding yourself that Volition isn't perfect
PLAY: RED FACTION: ARMAGEDDON
We love Volition at Play, we really do. But there was a time, just last year, when it messed up quite badly. It's good to go back and show ourselves that it's not the perfect studio we want to believe, mainly through the dross of *Red Faction: Armageddon*.



MMA
PLAY: EA SPORTS MMA
The UFC licence has passed to EA, meaning we will end up with another MMA title from the studio that brought us this: still the best representation of the sport available on any console. No, really.



Hammers
PLAY: SOULCALIBUR
Some say this is a sign of a lack of inspiration; others say it's just because we really like hammers and so want to write something about a game with them but we can't mention more *Red Faction* because we've already talked about it.



ACE COMBAT: ASSAULT HORIZON



WHAT WE SAID

PLAY 211
"Assault Horizon is a triumph in the context of the series, and possibly a great start to a new direction for the established brand.
"Initially thrilling, the buzz soon fades as repetition sets in. Nevertheless, we've not played a more engaging or exciting arcade flight game on any console."

78%

metacritic

77
out of 100

WHAT OTHERS SAID

DID ACE COMBAT: ASSAULT HORIZON GIVE YOU THE NEED, THE NEED FOR SPEED? OR DID IT GIVE YOU A HEADACHE AS BAD AS GOOSE'S?



JAMES WARD Due to 'Press (X) to fist pump' it is officially the greatest game ever. Not my rules.

CHRIS TREMAYNE That game became awesome as soon as I discovered I could paint every aircraft banana yellow.

JOHN MURRAY Nah. Gave me a boregasm.

REECE WARD I never bothered to get it.

THOMAS DAVIS There is a collector's edition at EB Games that I have been meaning to get, but I never got around to it.



@METALPAUL1000 I picked it up. Loved the PS2 games. Loved this one. Great music. Great action and best of all a surprise QTE at the end sequence.

@SIDEWINDER_16 Picked it up. Enjoyed it but the close-quarters combat system was unnecessary and took most of the fun out of dogfights.

@SKORPIO917 Well personally I found *Assault Horizon* great fun. Me and my step-dad would sit and play it all night!

@ADAMGUEST1985 I loved the *Ace Combat* games. Was absolutely poo at them, though!

@KIE_LFC I didn't buy it because it looks absolute s**t.

@LIVER47GAMING Any game where I have to control any car, motorbike or jet I am terrible at so I never bought it.

@CRUISE4 *Ace Combat: Assault Horizon* was a great game. I liked the new direction they went with; more intense action feel to it was a welcome addition. Overall a very solid action (*Top Gun*) game :)



Post-Mortem

■ When we heard *Assault Horizon* referred to as "the *Call Of Duty* of the skies", we laughed. Then we probably wrote it somewhere, as it makes for a snappy line. But we still laughed at everyone else who used it because it's such a stupid thing to say. If only because *Ace Combat* was never going to have the same impact as *COD* – not that people didn't want it to, just that realistically it was never likely that an air combat game would see multimillion sales. Around 590,000 sales later, and that opinion stands firm.

Still, taken on its own merits, *Assault Horizon* is a lot of fun and got itself a fair few fans in the bargain. It's one of those games you see popping up on the 'overlooked' lists and being recommended as a second-hand purchase for a tenner. We can't help but agree with that: it's worth a play, but it's not worth putting all your money into.

Ace Combat: Assault Horizon was not the *Call Of Duty* of the skies. Maybe if it had banked hard right from that label it would have found more success in its own right, instead of being ejected into obsolescence and parachuting into a forgotten role behind enemy lines. You've just read that; you can't unread it.

PLAY

The Voice of PlayStation
Gaming For the Arcade

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- THE ARKHAM SECRETS YOU MISSED
- MAKING OF ARKHAM ASYLUM

NEXT ISSUE

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DEAD OR ALIVE 5 HANDS-ON

Find out why you'll need this game

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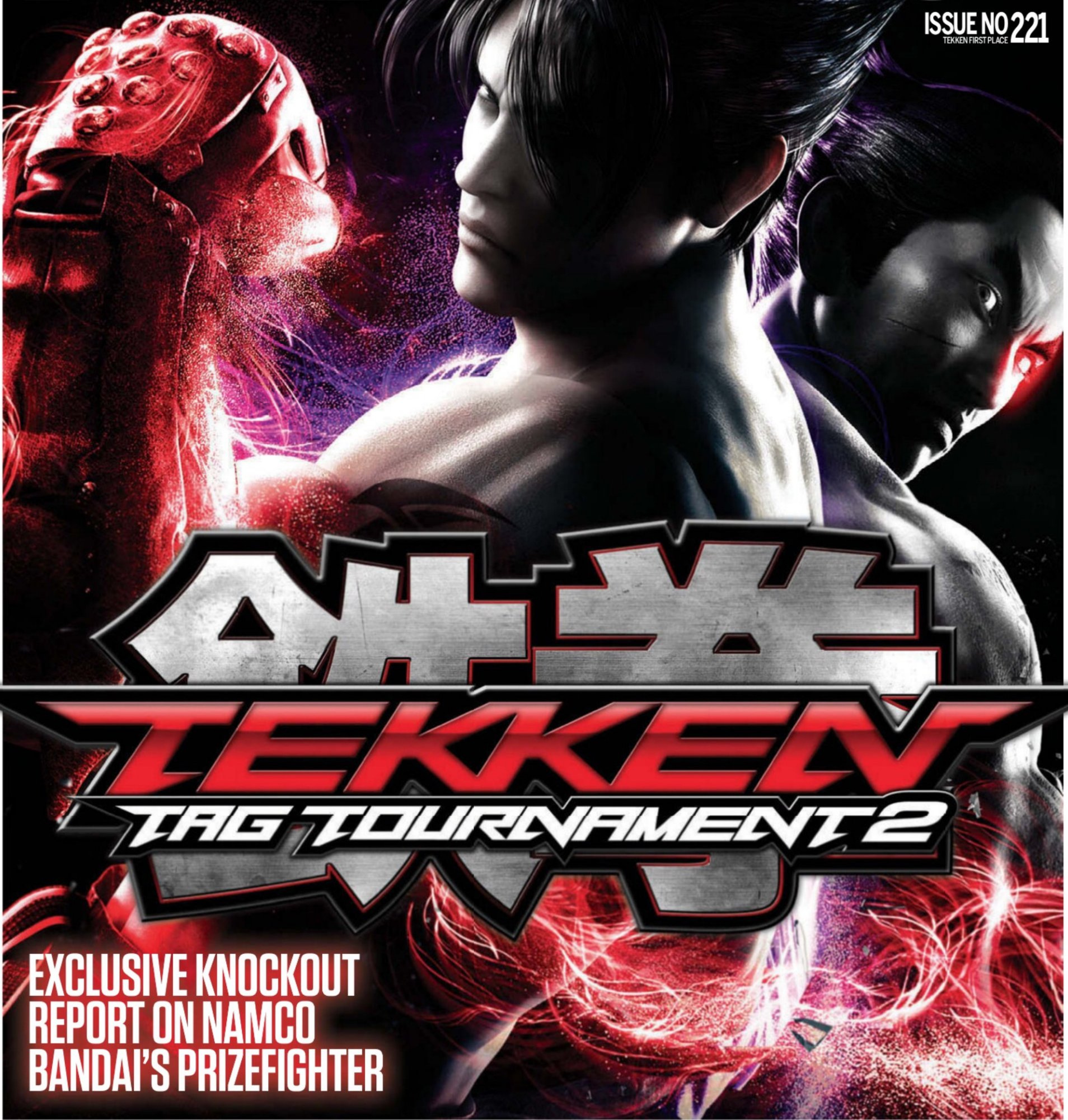
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*Argul's Tomb DLC available for download post release of Darksiders II, exact date TBC.

PlayStation3 | PSVita | PSN | PSP

PLAYBOY



ISSUE NO 221
TEKKEN FIRST PLACE



**EXCLUSIVE KNOCKOUT
REPORT ON NAMCO
BANDAI'S PRIZEFIGHTER**